

**DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AMONG PRE-SERVICE  
TEACHERS THOROUGH INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TEACHING**

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# **DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AMONG PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS THOROUGH INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TEACHING**

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University of Pittsburgh, 2015

This ethnographic methods study examines how an international student teaching (IST) program may help to prepare pre-service teachers (PSTs) for culturally diverse U.S. classrooms. Participants in the study take part in month-long IST program in Mexico City, Mexico. The study explores two related questions: what PSTs say they learn about intercultural competence during an IST experience, and what PSTs report as learning opportunities in international school classrooms that are difficult to transfer into the U.S. context. Two conclusions are offered. First, study findings suggest that IST programs may develop “cultural noticing” ability among participants. Cultural noticing is conceptualized as a foundational capacity of intercultural competence, and development of this capacity may contribute to PSTs’ success in culturally diverse U.S. classrooms. Second, PSTs report that they struggle to transfer lessons learned about teaching in international classrooms into U.S. urban contexts with culturally diverse students. Implications for theory, research, and practice are discussed.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE.....</b>	<b>XV</b>
<b>1.0 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 STUDY FRAMEWORKS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.1.1 Developing Intercultural Competence through ISTs .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.1.2 Lessons Learned in IST Classrooms, Transferring to U.S. Contexts.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.2 METHODS.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1.2.1 Ethnographic methods study .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1.2.1.1 Setting .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>(a) Participants.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>(b) University.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>(c) Mexico City IST program.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>1.3 DATA GENERATION .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>1.4 FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>1.4.1 Chapter two findings .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>1.4.2 Chapter three findings.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>1.5 LOOKING ACROSS BOTH CHAPTERS: KEY EMERGENT IDEAS .....</b>	<b>19</b>

<b>2.0 WHAT PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS SAY THEY LEARN ABOUT INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE THROUGH INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TEACHING: CULTURAL NOTICING AND CULTURAL RESPONDING.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>31</b>
2.1.1 Growth in Intercultural Competence Requires Support .....	33
2.1.2 Participants' individual qualities shape participant growth.....	37
<b>2.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>39</b>
2.2.1 Culturally responsive teaching framework .....	40
2.2.2 Funds of knowledge framework .....	41
2.2.3 Codes of power framework .....	42
<b>2.3 METHODS.....</b>	<b>45</b>
2.3.1 Researcher positionality .....	45
2.3.2 Ethnographic methods studies .....	48
2.3.3 Ethical considerations.....	49
2.3.4 Setting.....	50
2.3.4.1 Participants .....	50
2.3.4.2 University.....	51
2.3.4.3 Mexico City IST program .....	51
2.3.4.4 University at School (UAS) program .....	53
2.3.5 Data generation .....	56
2.3.5.1 Participant observation .....	57
2.3.5.2 Interviews .....	58
2.3.5.3 Student journals and lesson plans.....	60

2.3.5.4	Policy and program documents .....	61
2.3.5.5	Surveys.....	62
2.3.6	Data analysis.....	64
2.4	FINDINGS.....	66
2.4.1	Finding One: Participation in experiences outside of teaching seem to help PSTs increase their ability to engage in cultural noticing.....	66
2.4.1.1	Participation in cultural immersion activities.....	67
2.4.1.2	The value of cultural immersion experiences in developing cultural noticing ability.....	72
2.4.2	Finding Two: Participation in a context-specific teacher preparation program before the IST experience seems to improve a PST’s capacity to engage in both cultural noticing and cultural responding while in Mexico .....	74
2.4.2.1	Context-specific teacher preparation may make a difference.....	74
2.4.2.2	PSTs with some intercultural competence may deepen capacities through an IST .....	80
2.4.3	Finding Three: Even when the circumstances seem very favorable, some PSTs seem to miss opportunities for engaging in cultural noticing or cultural responding.....	82
2.5	CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS .....	85
2.5.1	Theory .....	87
2.5.2	Research .....	89
2.5.3	Practice.....	90

<b>3.0 WHAT PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS REPORT AS LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES THAT ARE DIFFICULT TO TRANSFER FROM INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TEACHING TO U.S. CLASSROOMS.....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>3.1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>94</b>
3.1.1 Cultural divides as a problem in teacher education .....	94
3.1.2 International student teaching programs .....	97
3.1.3 Studying what PSTs say they learn in an IST program .....	98
<b>3.2 A LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>99</b>
3.2.1 Learning about culturally different others .....	101
3.2.2 Learning about themselves.....	102
3.2.3 Learning about the practice of teaching .....	103
3.2.3.1 Learning about content .....	104
3.2.3.2 Learning about context .....	105
3.2.3.3 Learning about relationship-building.....	108
<b>3.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>112</b>
3.3.1 Diversity and opportunity gaps framework .....	114
3.3.1.1 Color blindness.....	115
3.3.1.2 Working through cultural conflicts .....	116
3.3.1.3 Understanding how meritocracy operates.....	117
3.3.1.4 Low expectations and deficit mind-sets .....	118
3.3.1.5 Context-neutral mind-sets.....	119
3.3.2 Culturally relevant teaching framework .....	121
3.3.2.1 Supporting student learning .....	121



3.3.2.2	Developing cultural competence.....	122
3.3.2.3	Developing socio-political competence.....	123
3.4	METHODS.....	123
3.4.1	Researcher positionality .....	123
3.4.2	Ethnographic methods studies .....	127
3.4.3	Ethical considerations.....	128
3.4.4	Setting.....	129
3.4.4.1	University.....	129
3.4.4.2	Mexico City IST program .....	129
3.4.4.3	Benito Juarez International School.....	131
3.4.5	Participants .....	135
3.4.6	Data generation .....	137
3.4.6.1	Participant observation .....	139
3.4.6.2	Interviews .....	140
3.4.6.3	Student journals and lesson plans .....	142
3.4.6.4	Policy and program documents .....	143
3.4.6.5	Surveys.....	144
3.4.7	Data analysis.....	146
3.5	FINDINGS.....	148
3.5.1	Finding One: PSTs report they struggle to see how expectations of students shape a teaching and learning environment.....	148
3.5.1.1	Lisa: Treating students “as people,” not as “subordinates” .....	149
3.5.1.2	Annie: “We can expect more out of our kids” .....	153

3.5.1.3	Renee: “I was able to teach mostly me” .....	157
3.5.2	Finding Two: PSTs report struggle to make instructional shifts in constructing knowledge due to organizational and structural variations in the different contexts.....	160
3.5.2.1	Michelle: Transferring teaching practices to new contexts can be “overwhelming” .....	161
3.5.2.2	Samuel: “People first,” rather than “goal first” .....	165
3.5.2.3	Lisa: “Students can learn a lot from each other” .....	167
3.5.3	Finding Three: PSTs are unsure how to create deep caring relationships that can serve as vehicles for student academic success in a U.S. public school context .....	170
3.5.3.1	Lisa: Becoming a teacher who can “make a difference” .....	170
3.5.3.2	Renee: Other mothering may be too much .....	173
3.5.3.3	Elizabeth: U.S. teachers are under “too much stress” to form relationships .....	176
3.6	CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS.....	179
3.6.1	Review of data themes .....	180
3.6.2	Implications of study.....	184
3.6.2.1	Theory .....	184
3.6.2.2	Research.....	186
3.6.2.3	Practice .....	189
4.0	CONCLUSION .....	192

<b>4.1 INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE: CULTURAL NOTICING AND CULTURAL RESPONDING .....</b>	<b>193</b>
<b>4.1.1 Implications .....</b>	<b>194</b>
<b>4.1.1.1 Theory .....</b>	<b>194</b>
<b>4.1.1.2 Research.....</b>	<b>195</b>
<b>4.1.1.3 Practice .....</b>	<b>197</b>
<b>(a) Pre-trip preparation and de-briefing .....</b>	<b>199</b>
<b>(b) Reflection activities throughout the trip.....</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>4.2 LESSONS LEARNED IN INTERNATIONAL CLASSROOMS AND CULTURALLY GROUNDED INSTRUCTION.....</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>4.2.1 Implications .....</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>4.2.1.1 Theory .....</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>4.2.1.2 Research.....</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>4.2.1.3 Practice .....</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>4.3 NEXT STEPS IN MY RESEARCH .....</b>	<b>206</b>
<b>4.3.1 Study one: a follow on study about intercultural competence and IST programs .....</b>	<b>206</b>
<b>4.3.1.1 Methods .....</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>(a) Participants.....</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>(i) Participant group one: Mexico City alumni – past 20 years.....</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>(ii) Participant group two: Mexico City alumni – present cohort.....</b>	<b>208</b>
<b>(b) Data analysis.....</b>	<b>209</b>
<b>4.3.1.2 Significance of the proposed study .....</b>	<b>210</b>

4.3.2 Study two: Examining learning across contexts through Culturally Grounded Instruction .....	210
4.3.2.1 Methods .....	211
4.3.2.2 Data analysis.....	212
4.3.2.3 Significance of study .....	212
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	214

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Data Generation Strategies .....	14
Table 2. Key Analysis Codes and Definitions .....	65
Table 3. Data generation timeline .....	138
Table 4. Key analysis codes and definitions .....	147

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1. K-12 public school students by race and ethnicity in urban areas, Fall 2011 .....	25
Figure 2. U.S. Teaching force by race / ethnicity, 2011-12.....	25
Figure 3. Intercultural Competence .....	88
Figure 4: Literature review themes and sub-themes .....	112

## **PREFACE**

Undertaking this dissertation study has been a fascinating journey for me. I have transitioned from my role as a classroom teacher and teacher leader into new roles as a teacher educator, education researcher, and academic. I am deeply grateful to all of my dissertation committee members for supporting me in this journey: Dr. Patricia Crawford, Dr. John P. Myers, Dr. Jennifer Creamer, and my advisor, “Doc” H. Richard Milner, IV. I can truly say that I have learned from everyone on my committee and benefitted from the guidance of each person. I also must acknowledge the vital role that my husband, Paul Cunningham, and my immediate family (Roberta A. Bossert, Leslie D. Bossert, Lori Melton and Ralph Melton) have played in this journey. Without their active support, completing a dissertation study while simultaneously becoming the mother of twin children would have been completely impossible. Finally, I have had tremendous support from all of my colleagues at Pitt’s Center for Urban Education, who cheered me on and encouraged me throughout my dissertation process. All of these people – committee members, family, and colleagues – have invested so much in my professional growth over the past few years. I look forward to making them all proud as I embrace my new roles and start the next chapter of my professional life.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This dissertation study links together two related interests of mine: study abroad programs and teacher preparation for culturally diverse<sup>1</sup> U.S. classrooms. Like many of the White teacher educators involved in global and multicultural education studied by Merryfield (2000), the experience that helped me first understand that culturally diverse U.S. Americans experience society differently than I do as a White person occurred while living outside of the United States. I spent a year and a half working as a teacher at a home for orphaned children in rural Honduras directly after college. This was my first experience being outside of the dominant culture and I learned how to adapt my behavior to respond to this cultural context. Many of these adaptations related to the more defined gender roles I encountered as compared to the U.S. Mid-Atlantic region from which I came. This experience opened my eyes to the fact that differences in cultural practices<sup>2</sup> and values exist and can significantly influence how people interact with one another. These differences had been largely invisible to me in the U.S., even though I grew up with both White and African American neighbors. This lived experience in Honduras sparked my interest in teaching abroad and study abroad programs.

The experience that sparked my interest in teacher preparation for culturally diverse U.S. classrooms was my first U.S. teaching position after my return from Honduras. I worked at a public high school in Washington, D.C. where the majority of the staff and students were African American. Although working in Honduras helped me to understand that differences in cultural



practices and values exist, working in D.C. opened my eyes to the fact that these differences didn't only exist between people from different countries, they also existed between people living in the same U.S. community. Until this point I had no idea that culturally diverse Americans may engage in cultural practices or hold values different than the ones I held as a White American. Teachers working in unknown cultural contexts sometimes rely on a cultural guide who can help them make sense of the context (Marx & Moss, 2011). My cultural guide was my wonderful mentor teacher, who was an African American woman. By noting how she interacted with both staff and students, I learned about how adapt my behavior and interactions to respond to the African American environment in which I worked. For example, I learned to put much more emphasis on cultivating good relationships than I was used to doing in predominantly White environments. This lived experience in a Washington, D.C. public school sparked my interest in preparing teachers, particularly White teachers like myself, to successfully work in classrooms with culturally diverse students.

Together these two teaching experiences, in Honduras and in D.C., have shaped my interest in how study abroad programs may help teachers understand and respond to the variety of cultural practices and values that exist among students in U.S. classrooms. As a veteran participant and program leader of study abroad programs, I have had a long-time interest in how study abroad programs may help teachers develop intercultural competence: the ability to consider the values and perspectives of culturally different others, then act in ways that take these differences into account (Alred, Byram, & Fleming, 2006). More specifically, I have been interested in how development of intercultural competence might help teachers support the academic and social success of culturally diverse U.S. students. Development of intercultural competence may be particularly important for teachers, as teacher education scholarship has

suggested that teachers encounter and must bridge cultural divides in order to successfully support the academic and social success of all U.S. students (Delpit, 2012; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2015; Milner, 2010a). Concurrently, I have wondered about what obstacles teachers encounter in transferring what they learn through study abroad programs into the U.S. classrooms where they teach upon their return. These thoughts and ideas, along with my lived experiences in Honduras and D.C., led to the design of this dissertation study.

It is important to clarify what the terms culture, cultural community, and cultural practices mean in the context of this study. Understanding these constructs is important because this study explores how pre-service teachers (PSTs) may develop the capacity to notice and respond to students' cultural practices in the classroom by developing intercultural competence. Culture can be understood as the patterns of beliefs, values, and practices inherited and transformed over time (Gutierrez, 2002). These values and practices are a result of participation in a particular cultural community, and how a person engages with the beliefs, values, and practices of a particular culture may vary from one individual to another as the context for their participation changes (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003).

Given this understanding of culture, a cultural community can be subsequently understood as a group of people who share a culture (Rogoff, 2003). Although community membership should not be defined by social categories such as a person's ethnicity, race or primary language, these demographic identifiers are relevant to understanding many cultural communities because they have had such long-standing influence on the values people hold and the practices in which they have opportunities to participate (Gutierrez, 2002).

Cultural practices are recurring, goal-directed activities that involve two or more people; activities are the smaller tasks that make up these practices (Nasir & Hand, 2008). As Gutierrez

and Rogoff (2003) explain, people engage in particular cultural practices as a result of participation in a particular cultural community over time. Engagement in these practices is not static or located within individuals, but rather dynamic and may vary from one individual to another as the context for participation changes. Additionally, youth in any cultural community may emphasize their engagement in different cultural practices than adults, as there are many activities important for adults where youth are only peripheral participants (C. D. Lee, 2007). Finally, people can participate in multiple cultural communities and engage in various cultural practices (Rogoff, 2003). For all of these reasons, teachers who consider themselves as from the same cultural community as some of their students may not engage in all of the same cultural practices. And as Gutierrez (2002) offers, this understanding of culture represents it as “patterned and varied...culture and cultural practices are never completely known to anyone, nor is there one culture of the activity for the group as a whole” (p. 313).

This study is organized into two related chapters that explore what pre-service teachers (PSTs) say they learn through participation in an international student teaching (IST) program. Chapter two is titled, “What Pre-Service Teachers Say They Learn About Intercultural Competence Through International Student Teaching: Cultural Noticing and Cultural Responding.” This chapter explores what PSTs learn through their IST experience related to the development of intercultural competence, including student-teaching in an international school classroom, staying with a host family, attending planned group excursions, and participating in cultural activities such as attendance at professional sporting events.

Chapter three is titled, “What Pre-Service Teachers Report as Learning Opportunities that are Difficult to Transfer from International Student Teaching to U.S. Classrooms.” This chapter explores more specifically what PSTs learn from their experience in an international school

classroom as opposed to the study of the broader IST experience described in chapter two. As data themes from the second chapter centered on the value of the overall IST experience and much less on what PSTs learned in the international school classroom, questions emerged about the relative value of student teaching abroad for PSTs in comparison to a general study abroad program for a PST that had no student teaching component. Questions also emerged about why chapter two centers much on PSTs beginning to notice details about cultural context<sup>3</sup> in Mexico and much less on PSTs actually adapting their teaching to the cultural context. These ideas led me to wonder what PSTs were actually learning from their IST classroom experiences, and if they could learn more under different circumstances. I am glad that I pursued this follow-on line of inquiry, as I believe data themes from this second study have implications related to helping any PST transfer lessons learned from one context to another.

## **1.1 STUDY FRAMEWORKS**

### **1.1.1 Developing Intercultural Competence through ISTs**

The study presented in chapter two examines PST experiences related to intercultural competence in IST programs in a broad sense. In this chapter, I extend Alred et al.'s (2006) definition of intercultural competence based upon my research findings and the guiding ideas detailed in my conceptual framework. I suggest that intercultural competence begins with a foundation of cultural noticing, and moves into action through cultural responding. Drawing upon my findings, I present two terms, *cultural noticing* and *cultural responding*, a way of naming what I learned and a way of capturing the voices and my observations of the participants.

Cultural noticing<sup>4</sup> can be described as a person's ability to notice details about cultural context. Cultural responding refers to actions a person takes or adapts as a result of cultural noticing. The main research question for this chapter is: what do PSTs say they learn about intercultural competence during an international student teaching experience?

My conceptualization of intercultural competence as being comprised of a foundational capacity of cultural noticing and a follow-on capacity of cultural responding is an extension of the conceptual framework I discuss in chapter two. This conceptual framework is drawn from the culturally responsive pedagogy framework (Gay, 2010), the codes of power framework (Delpit, 2006), and the funds of knowledge framework (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). These frameworks all relate to issues of culture and difference, and allow me to make sense of how my participants understand their experiences in IST programs. Each of the frameworks adds to my conceptualization of intercultural competence as beginning with a foundation of cultural noticing and moving into action through cultural responding.

The culturally responsive pedagogy framework described by Gay (2010) offers that successful teaching of culturally diverse students requires that teachers should demonstrate caring for students, be proficient in communicating across cultures, and be able to adapt both curriculum and instruction to respond to students' needs, experiences, and cultural backgrounds. A teacher's ability to do this presumes that (s)he has critical cultural awareness: in other words, an understanding that all teaching and learning experiences are cultural practices, and reflect the cultural values of the teacher conducting the experience (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

The funds of knowledge framework presented by Gonzalez et al. (2005) suggests that teachers should spend time learning about their students' households and communities, and then draw from these "funds of knowledge" that their students possess in the classroom. This calls

for a teacher's ability to translate ideas from one context and use them in another, so that classroom learning can be scaffolded upon a student's prior knowledge.

Finally, the codes of power framework detailed by Delpit (2006) emphasizes that teachers must help students to express themselves not only in ways familiar to them but also in ways that society requires as well. By teaching both forms, teachers help their students to understand the "codes of power" which exist in every classroom and society as a whole. Delpit argues that a teacher's ability to do this depends on his/her intercultural communication skills, as they must explain these codes to students in a way that makes sense to them. Delpit's contribution to my conceptual framework is also important because she acknowledges that in U.S. society, these codes of power are race-related. White teachers do not always recognize the power they hold in classrooms and society as members of the U.S. dominant culture.

The second chapter draws from literature on the topic of developing intercultural competence through among PSTs through IST programs. Literature from the past ten years was surveyed in four scholarly databases, using the following keywords: "pre-service teacher education," "study abroad," "international field experience," "cultural," "cross-cultural," "intercultural," "multicultural," and "diversity". Two key themes emerged through this review of literature that shaped the development of this first study. The first theme is that participants in IST programs require specific types of support such as reflection activities in order to develop intercultural competence (Brindley, Quinn, & Morton, 2009; Hopkins-Gillespie, 2012; Jiang & DeVillar, 2011; Johnson & Battalio, 2008; Karaman & Tochen, 2010; Mahon & Cushner, 2007; Marx & Moss, 2011; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Santoro & Major, 2012; Sharma, Phillion, & Malewski, 2011; Sharma, Rahatzad, & Phillion, 2013; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Willard-Holt, 2001). Without this support, growth in intercultural competence may

be limited. The second literature theme that shaped chapter two is the idea that IST experiences are not homogenous in nature: individual participant differences inform a participant's development of intercultural competence (Jiang, Coffey, DeVillar, & Bryan, 2010; Johnson & Battalio, 2008; Karaman, 2010; Malewski & Phillion, 2009; Matthews & Lawley, 2011; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Zhao, Meyers, & Meyers, 2009). These two literature themes shed light on the themes that emerged in the chapter two data analysis, and helped to shape the study's implications for theory, research, and practice.

### **1.1.2 Lessons Learned in IST Classrooms, Transferring to U.S. Contexts**

The study presented in chapter three examines what PSTs learn specifically in international school classrooms, and how they talk about transferring<sup>5</sup> what they learn into the context of U.S. classrooms. The main research question for this chapter is: What do PSTs report as learning opportunities in international school classrooms that are difficult to transfer into the U.S. context?

I draw from two conceptual frameworks to analyze data in the chapter three study: the diversity and opportunity gap framework (Milner, 2010a) and the culturally relevant teaching framework (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Both of these frameworks help me to make sense of my data by focusing on the relationship between culture and teaching, and emphasize the role that relationships play as a vehicle for student academic and social success. Together, these frameworks help me to conceptualize what I term “culturally grounded instruction.” Culturally grounded instruction refers to a set of three guiding ideas that help teachers support the academic success of all students. I use these three ideas to make sense of the data generated in this study. The first idea is that deep caring relationships between teachers and students should serve as a

vehicle for student learning (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, 2010a). By deep caring relationships I mean relationships where teachers care for students as people and not just as learners. Second, teachers should understand how teacher and school expectations of students shape teaching practices and student learning (Milner, 2010b). By expectations I mean what schools and teachers believe students are capable of achieving. And third, teachers should understand how facets of a school's context shapes the learning opportunities afforded to students (Milner, 2010a). By context, I mean the community, state, and national forces that shape a learner's experience in a particular place (Milner, 2010a).

The diversity and opportunity gaps conceptual framework and the culturally relevant teaching framework shape my conceptualization of culturally grounded instruction in different ways. The diversity and opportunity gaps conceptual framework emphasizes the educational opportunities students have rather than educational outcomes, and calls attention to the social systems that shape student learning experiences instead of blaming culturally diverse students for their poor performance on standardized achievement tests (Milner, 2010a). This framework focuses my data on all three guiding ideas that are part of culturally grounded instruction. It highlights the role of expectations, as it describes how school and teacher expectations shape classroom learning. It highlights the role of context, as it explains how contextual forces impact student learning opportunities. And it highlights the role of relationships, as it suggests that a teacher's efforts to build strong relationships with students can be essential to helping students achieve academic success.

The culturally relevant teaching framework offers a theoretical model for effective teaching that enables all students to achieve academically, affirm their cultural identity, and develop critical perspectives about social inequities that impact their lives (Ladson-Billings,



1995b). This framework focuses my data most specifically on the power of strong teacher-student relationships. Additionally, Ladson-Billings (2009) suggests a variety of classroom practices associated with helping students meet the tenets of culturally relevant teaching. Many of these practices relate to communicating high expectations to students and helping students understand the context in which they live as a means of developing their socio-political consciousness. In this way, the culturally relevant teaching framework also focuses my data on ideas about expectations and context.

The third chapter draws from literature on the topic of what PSTs learn specifically about teaching through participation in IST programs. Key literature themes emerged from my literature review that relate to what PSTs learn about context and relationship building in international classrooms. Key themes related to learning about context in teaching include the following ideas:

- IST placements in contexts similar to the cultural and socio-economic context of U.S. public schools may help PSTs transfer what they learn about context (DeVillar & Jiang, 2009; Jiang & DeVillar, 2011); and
- on-going reflection during the IST that focuses on transferring their learning to U.S. classrooms may also promote the transfer of what was learned (Jiang et al., 2010).

Important ideas related to learning about relationship-building include the following:

- teaching in an IST classroom may push PSTs to use more varied communication strategies when working with culturally diverse students and second language learners in U.S. classrooms (Miller & Gonzalez, 2010; Willard-Holt, 2001); and
- IST experiences may motivate PSTs to put ideas about inclusive classroom communities into practice once they return to work in U.S. classrooms (Faulconer, 2003).

These literature themes shed light on the data themes that emerged in chapter three, and helped to structure the implications of the third chapter for the theory, research, and practice of teacher education.

## **1.2 METHODS**

### **1.2.1 Ethnographic methods study**

Both chapters of this dissertation are ethnographic methods studies. I engaged in field work and drew upon multiple data sources to help me construct the sense my participants make of their IST experiences (Hatch, 2002; Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007).

#### **1.2.1.1 Setting**

##### **(a) Participants**

The twenty-two participants in this study are all undergraduate seniors majoring in teacher education at Rolling Hills University (RHU) who provided informed consent. (All institutional names are pseudonyms.) Participants include seventeen white females, four white males, and one African American male. All are between twenty-one and twenty-three years old, except one twenty-six year old participant.

##### **(b) University**

The IST program under study is offered by Rolling Hills University (RHU) College of Education. The RHU website<sup>6</sup> offers a basic description of the university. RHU is a residential and public university located in a rural area about fifty miles away from a major U.S. city in the

Mid-Atlantic region. RHU has approximately 8,500 students, and approximately 90% of these students are state residents.

**(c) Mexico City IST program**

The RHU Mexico City IST program was selected for study because it has been in existence for over twenty years, using the same international school for all student teaching placements and the same network of host families since the beginning of the program. This program stability led me to believe that I would encounter fewer unexpected challenges than I would if I studied a more recently established IST program.

PSTs prepare for their IST experience by attending six monthly pre-departure meetings on the RHU campus. The group travels together to Mexico City, Mexico for four and a half weeks with two RHU professors. They live with Mexican families and work daily as student-teachers at an international school. The group travels to Mexican cultural sites most weekends.

Benito Juarez International School. The Benito Juarez International School (JIS) is a private international K-12 school in Mexico City. JIS offers an English language and American-style educational program to over 2,600 students<sup>7</sup>. JIS utilizes the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum<sup>8</sup>. The student body is 58% Mexican and 28% percent U.S. American. Approximately 75% of teachers and administrators are Mexican and 22% are U.S. American.

It is important to note that the PSTs in this study did not immerse themselves in a Mexican public school community, rather in a private and international school community located in Mexico. As such, the PSTs in this study may have noticed different details about cultural context and they may have learned different lessons about teaching than they would have in a Mexican public school. What PSTs noticed in this study and the lessons they learned only

represent the cultural context that is the JIS school community, and cannot be generalized to Mexican public schools or any wider context.

Mexican public schools could offer PSTs a student teaching experience that more closely mirrors a U.S. urban classroom, which might help them translate lessons they learn about teaching into a U.S. urban context (DeVillar & Jiang, 2009; Jiang & DeVillar, 2011). Mexican public schools may draw students from all socioeconomic backgrounds and not just students whose families can afford private school tuition. Also, Mexican schools follow national curriculum standards set by the Mexican Secretariat of Public Education (Secretaria de Educacion Publica, 2010). This curriculum model may be different than the internationally-minded curriculum used by JIS as an International Baccalaureate school.

Although teaching in a Mexican public school could offer PSTs a cultural context that more closely mirrors U.S. urban schools, student-teaching at JIS remains an attractive option for PSTs in this program for two main reasons. First, many U.S. teacher educators are concerned that teaching in another country will not give PSTs exposure to curriculum and standards they need to understand to be successful in U.S. classrooms (Alfaro & Quesada, 2010). Completing the student teaching experience in an international school that uses an American-style curriculum as JIS does alleviates this concern. Second, many IST programs select English-speaking environments for international student teaching placements so that PSTs can more easily take on the responsibilities of teachers, work independently, and communicate with students in the classroom without any additional difficulties presented by communicating in a foreign language (Marx & Moss, 2011). Teaching at JIS where most instruction occurs in English enables the PSTs in this study to complete their student teaching requirement in Mexico without having to know the Spanish language.

### 1.3 DATA GENERATION

Data generation for this dissertation study included fieldwork both at RHU and in Mexico. I spent over three hundred and thirty hours in participant observation, I conducted and reviewed over twenty-two hours of interviews, I transcribed and analyzed fourteen hours of interview transcripts, I analyzed twelve student journals and six lesson plans, I reviewed eighteen different policy and program documents, and I analyzed twenty-two sets of pre- and post-trip surveys. Spending this much time engaged in fieldwork and generating data gives me a deep and rich understanding of the context that I am studying (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). I selected these data generation sources because ethnographic methods studies should collect a range of data about participants, but draw most heavily from participant observation and interview data (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Table 1 below summarizes my data generation strategies before, during, and after the IST program occurred.

**Table 1.** Data Generation Strategies

Before IST program at RHU	During IST program in Mexico City	After IST program
Participant observation: six pre-departure meetings	Participant observation: classroom observations, group meetings, planned excursions	Post-test surveys via email, four weeks after return
Artifact collection: RHU policy and program documents	Interviews (round 1,2) in person	Interviews (round 3) over the phone – 4-6 weeks after return
Pre-test surveys via email	Participants create journal entries and lesson plans	Artifact collection: Participant journals and lesson plans, RHU policy and program documents, Participant program evaluations
	Artifact collection: JIS documents	

## **1.4 FINDINGS**

Data themes that emerged related to each chapter are presented here. Both sets of data themes have implications for the theory, research, and practice of teacher education.

### **1.4.1 Chapter two findings**

The data themes of the first study suggest that PSTs say they learn about intercultural competence through an IST experience in multiple ways. First, cultural immersion outside one's home country appears to help to develop the cultural noticing ability that I suggest is the foundation of intercultural competence. Second, participation in a context-specific teacher education program before the IST program seems to improve a PST's ability to engage in both cultural noticing and cultural responding while in Mexico. And finally, even when circumstances seem very favorable, some PSTs seem to miss opportunities for engaging in cultural noticing and cultural responding in Mexico and would benefit from increased programmatic support.

The first data theme brings to light the idea that cultural immersion outside one's home country may help to develop cultural noticing ability. Cultural immersion involves a participant's immersion in a cultural context outside of their own and involves affective, behavioral, and cognitive learning (Cushner, 2007). Based upon my findings, I define cultural noticing as a person's ability to notice details about cultural context. Participants say that this development happens most frequently during an IST experience through cultural immersion activities outside of the student-teaching classroom. Activities such as attending a professional soccer game and interacting with Mexican host families seem to help PSTs build the most

cultural noticing ability by immersing them in situations with many contextual details different than their home environment. Attending to cultural noticing through participation in and reflecting on these activities helps participants to build cultural noticing ability.

The second data theme suggests that participation in a context-specific teacher education program before the IST experience seems to improve a PST's ability to engage in both cultural noticing and cultural responding while in Mexico. Cultural responding refers to actions a person takes or adapts as a result of cultural noticing, and context-specific teacher education programs are intentionally designed to focus PST attention on contextual factors in the classroom that should inform their teaching practice. PSTs who were part of a separate, context-specific teacher education program at RHU before participating in the IST program seem to engage in more cultural noticing in Mexico and sometimes engage in cultural responding based on what they notice. This may be the case because the PSTs in the context-specific program spent a year before going to Mexico attending to their cultural noticing and cultural responding capacities through program activities.

The third and final data theme that emerged from the first study is that even when circumstances seem very favorable, some PSTs seem to miss opportunities for engaging in cultural noticing and cultural responding in Mexico. This appears to point to the need for guided reflection activities throughout the IST program. These activities are needed as the data themes suggest that without them, some PSTs do not reflect on the cultural context independently and seem to fail to notice important details about cultural context. Attending to these contextual details through guided reflection could help PSTs build cultural noticing capacities, and eventually cultural responding capacities as well.

### **1.4.2 Chapter three findings**

The data themes that emerged from the second study suggest that although PSTs talk about a number of important learning opportunities they experienced while working in their IST classroom at JIS, they also report that some of what they learned seems challenging to transfer out of a private, international school context and into a U.S. school context. Three key themes that emerged from the data relate to PSTs reporting that they struggle to see how expectations shape teaching and learning environments, they struggle with instructional shifts in constructing knowledge due to organizational and structural variations in different contexts, and they are unsure how to create deep caring relationships that can serve as vehicles for student academic success in a U.S. public school context.

The first data theme that emerged is that PSTs struggle to see how expectations shape learning environments. All three PSTs presented as case studies in this section agree that working at JIS helped them see how powerful teaching and learning can be in a high expectations environment. However, they all had a difficult time taking a step back and understanding the role expectations played in shaping the experience for teachers and students at both JIS and in their previous U.S. urban<sup>9</sup> school placements. For example, as PST Lisa discussed differences between JIS and her previous experience student teaching in Rockbrook, an urban characteristic district close to RHU, she described her JIS co-op as a “very good teacher” who “treated her students like people,” and her Rockbrook co-op as a “terrible teacher” who was “flat out mean” to her students (Lisa 2). It appears that Lisa does not see how having low expectations for students and working in a low-expectations school environment impacts how her Rockbrook co-op teacher experiences her job as a teacher. Other PSTs made similar



comparisons that seem to indicate that they failed to see how expectations shape school and classroom environments.

The second data theme that emerged in chapter two is that PSTs reported that they struggle with instructional shifts in constructing knowledge due to organizational and structural variations in different contexts. All three PSTs presented as case studies in this section agree that although they learned important lessons at JIS about utilizing a shared knowledge construction approach to learning instead of acting as a classroom knowledge authority, they are unsure they can implement what they learned in the context of U.S. classrooms. For example, Michelle says that she thinks that the shared knowledge construction approach used at JIS helps students “learn better” than the classroom knowledge authority stance she says she used at her last student-teaching placement (Michelle 2). However, she is concerned that the pressure teachers face in U.S. classrooms to cover a set amount of material in a limited amount of time and “restrictions” related to with state assessment testing make it difficult to “get creative with teaching” and use shared knowledge construction methods such as class discussions (Michelle 2). Although Michelle does recognize that the U.S. context is different from the JIS context, she does not seem to make the conceptual leap needed to re-configure this important teaching practice into a U.S. context. Other PSTs made similar observations that seem to indicate that they struggle with implementing what they learned about teaching at JIS in a U.S. context.

The final data theme that emerged is that PSTs in this study are unsure how to create deep caring relationships that can serve as vehicles for student academic success in a U.S. public school context. Although all three PSTs presented as case studies in this section seemed to learn a lot about deep caring relationships at JIS, they did not see these relationships as linked to student academic success. PST Renee was impressed by the deep caring relationships she saw

between JIS teachers and students. However, much of her understanding of what these relationships were about seemed to revolve around the “hugs” and “hair tousling” she saw teachers give students (Renee 3). In many U.S. classrooms, these physical displays of affection are culturally inappropriate, and teachers who engage in too much physical contact with students may be accused of sexual misconduct. As Renee thinks these physical displays of affection are culturally inappropriate in U.S. classrooms, she is unsure of the role deep caring relationships should play at all in U.S. classrooms (Renee 3). Furthermore, Renee worries that taking on a deep caring relationship with all of her U.S. students would push her to be “more of a social worker” than a teacher (Renee 3). It seems that Renee misses the connection between deep caring relationships and student academic success, and what culturally appropriate deeply caring relationships can look like in a U.S. context. Other PSTs reported similar ideas, finding the deeply caring relationships they observed at JIS as a meaningful vehicle for teacher to support the personal development of students, but not their academic development. Furthermore, other PSTs echoed Renee’s concerns that the physical touching that seemed to characterize deeply caring relationships at JIS would be culturally inappropriate outside of Mexico and therefore not transferrable into a U.S. context.

## **1.5      LOOKING ACROSS BOTH CHAPTERS: KEY EMERGENT IDEAS**

This dissertation study makes two original contributions to understanding how IST programs may prepare PSTs for culturally diverse U.S. classrooms. First, the broad experience of participating in an IST program does seem to be useful in preparing PSTs for culturally diverse U.S. classrooms. By broad experience I mean all of the facets of the PST’s IST participation

including homestay experience, student-teaching, and planned cultural excursions. This experience seems to be useful because it may help PSTs develop cultural noticing ability, which I conceptualize as the foundational capacity of intercultural competence. This new way of understanding intercultural competence and how it develops may be of benefit to researchers and practitioners alike. Second, IST programs hold the potential of allowing PSTs to have rich and meaningful student-teaching experiences in a previously unknown cultural context. This student-teaching experience could inform their future work with culturally diverse U.S. students. However, the participants in this study say they struggle to transfer many of the lessons they learned about teaching from the international school where they worked into a U.S. context. This problem has not been well-studied in education research to date, and as such this study fills a critical gap in the literature. This new understanding of what lessons PSTs learn about teaching and the challenges they say they face in transferring this learning arises from the use of a new conceptual framework that I term culturally grounded instruction. I offer *culturally grounded instruction* as a new way to communicate some important ideas teachers need to understand in order to support the academic and social success of culturally diverse students, and particularly ideas about how they can transfer what they learn in other classrooms and use it to support the success of these students.

First, the broad experience of participating in an IST program may be useful in helping to prepare PSTs for culturally diverse U.S. classrooms because IST programs may help to develop cultural noticing ability among participants. Development of this foundational capacity is a person's first step to developing the intercultural competence I suggest teachers need to support the academic and social development of culturally diverse U.S. students. I conceptualize cultural noticing as a person's ability to notice details about cultural context. I conceptualize cultural

responding as a follow-on intercultural competence capacity, which refers to actions a person takes or adapts as a result of cultural noticing. This new conceptualization of intercultural competence is an original scholarly contribution that complements what already exists in the literature about teachers can best support culturally diverse students. My conceptualization of cultural noticing and cultural responding is related to Culturally Responsive Teaching (Gay, 2010), which I draw upon in the conceptual framework for chapter two. However, engagement in culturally responsive teaching as described by Gay (2010) presumes that teachers already have critical cultural awareness. In other words, they already understand that all teaching and learning experiences are cultural practices, and reflect the cultural values of the teacher conducting the experience (Gay, 2010). Cultural noticing names these first steps required for teachers to move towards this consciousness, and eventually develop the capacity to respond to what they notice in their classroom. IST programs may be useful for PSTs because it helps them begin to develop cultural noticing capacity. This foundational capacity starts PSTs on a path of developing the intercultural competence they need to support the academic and social development of culturally diverse U.S. students.

The second contribution this study makes is a close look at an understudied topic: what PSTs learn about teaching by completing a student-teaching experience in an international school classroom, and the problems they say they face in transferring what they learn into U.S. urban contexts. Findings are brought to light using a new conceptual framework, which I name *culturally grounded instruction*. This framework extends ideas brought forth by the culturally relevant teaching framework (Ladson-Billings, 2009) and the diversity and opportunity gap framework (Milner, 2010a). This framework highlights three new ideas related to what teachers need to understand in order to transfer lessons learned about teaching between contexts. First,

teachers need to understand that expectations act as a filter and shape all classroom environments. Second, teachers need to understand the role that context plays in making one classroom seem very different from another. And finally, teachers need to understand the need for deep caring relationships with students that go beyond helping them with personal problems and serve as vehicles for student academic success. I suggest that this framework can be used to examine what PSTs say are problems of transfer between any two teaching environments, not only what PSTs say are problems of transfer from an international context to a domestic one.

Although a number of studies in my literature review examine what PSTs learn about context while teaching in an international classroom (Brindley et al., 2009; Cruickshank & Westbrook, 2013; DeVillar & Jiang, 2009; Faulconer, 2003; Hopkins-Gillespie, 2012; Jiang et al., 2010; Jiang & DeVillar, 2011; Karaman & Tochen, 2010; J. F. K. Lee, 2009; Lupi, Batey, & Turner, 2012; Mahon & Cushner, 2007; Sharma et al., 2011; Sharma et al., 2013; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007; Yang, 2011; Zhao et al., 2009), only three of these studies (DeVillar & Jiang, 2009; Jiang et al., 2010; Jiang & DeVillar, 2011) make connections between what PSTs learn about teaching and how to transfer this learning to working with culturally diverse U.S. students. Furthermore, these three studies do not discuss these ideas in much depth. In this way, this dissertation study fills a critical gap in the literature by bringing to light the challenges PSTs say they face when transferring what they have learned in international classrooms into U.S. urban contexts.

As the origins of this study, main chapter sections, and key ideas that emerged have now been introduced, my writing now turns to an in-depth examination of the two research questions proposed. Chapter Two examines the research question, “What do PSTs say they learn about intercultural competence during an international student teaching experience?”. Chapter Three

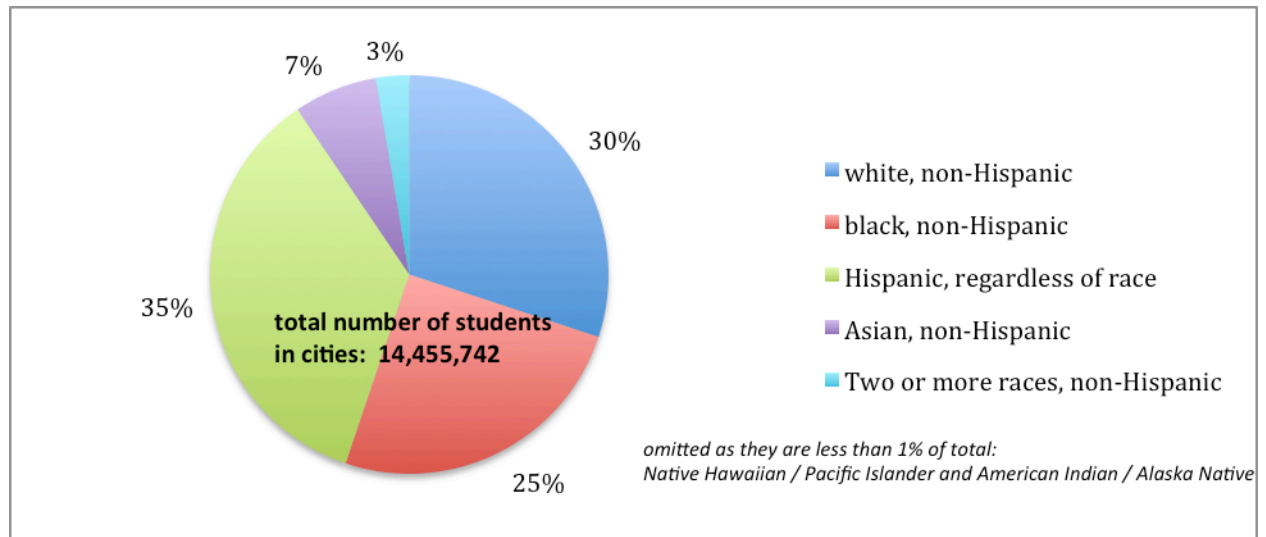
examines the research question, “What do PSTs report as learning opportunities in international school classrooms that are difficult to transfer into the U.S. context?”. I hope readers find these chapters both interesting and illuminating.

## **2.0 WHAT PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS SAY THEY LEARN ABOUT INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE THROUGH INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TEACHING: CULTURAL NOTICING AND CULTURAL RESPONDING**

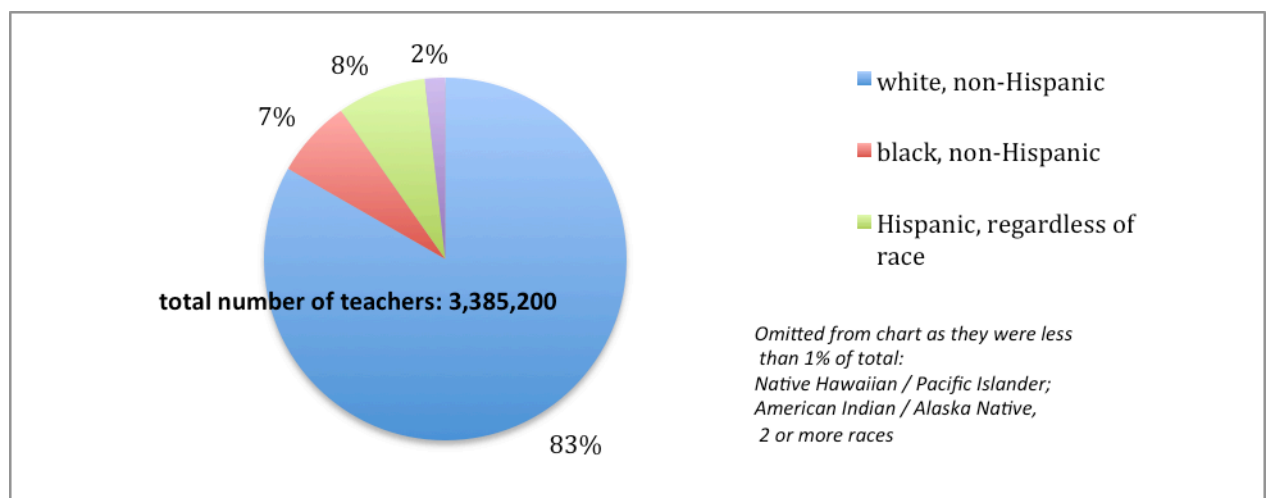
Main research question: What do PSTs say they learn about intercultural competence during an international student teaching experience?

U.S. public schools in recent decades have experienced a cultural divide, by which I mean that there has been a dramatic increase of students whose cultural backgrounds differ from that of their teacher (Gay, 2010; Milner, 2010a). This divide is most pronounced in U.S. urban<sup>10</sup> areas, as evidenced by data from the National Center for Education Statistics. The two figures below display data as reported by this source. Figure 1 shows U.S. public school students by race and ethnic group in U.S. urban areas, and reports that students identify as 35% Hispanic, 30% white, 25% African American, and the remaining 10% representing other racial and ethnic groups as well as multi-race students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012a). Figure 2 shows that 83% of all U.S. teachers are white, and all other racial and ethnic groups represent less than 10% each of the teaching force (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012b). Adding to this demographic data, research suggests that many teachers have little understanding of those culturally or racially different than themselves (Castro, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Milner, 2010a; Sleeter, 2008). This difference in student and teacher demographic profiles, along with concerns that teachers may have a poor understanding of many students, is the

problem of the cultural divide in U.S. public schools.



**Figure 1.** K-12 public school students by race and ethnicity in urban areas, Fall 2011



**Figure 2.** U.S. Teaching force by race / ethnicity, 2011-12

This cultural divide appears to be a significant barrier to the U.S. teaching force effectively supporting the academic development of culturally diverse students (Gay, 2010; Marx & Moss, 2011; Milner, 2010a). By culturally diverse, I mean non-White students and students whose first language is not English. Of course I understand that all people represent variations in cultural diversity, but for the purposes of this discussion I acknowledge that historically in the



U.S., Whites have been considered members of the dominant culture (Zeichner & Melnick, 1996) and all others have been considered “diverse” (Milner, 2010a). This cultural divide between teachers and culturally diverse students is of particular concern in preparing teachers for urban areas, as urban school districts feature higher cultural diversity and language diversity than other areas (Kincheloe, 2006). Although the urban context requires that teachers address these types of diversity in their teaching practice, most are unprepared to do so and leave the urban classroom within three years (Clarke & Holmes, 2006). This cultural divide is further evidenced as a serious problem in pre-service teacher education by the wide disparities in achievement data between White students and most other culturally diverse students (Cornbleth, 2008; Howard, 2010). Overall, it seems that many teachers are not successful in educating culturally diverse students.

Scholarship suggests that teacher education programs must do more to prepare new teachers to educate culturally diverse students (Ladson-Billings, 1999; McAllister & Irvine, 2000; Sleeter, 2004a). Some argue that teachers need more intercultural competence: the ability to consider the values and perspectives of culturally different others, then act in ways that take these differences into account (Alred et al., 2006). By culturally different, I mean having a different cultural background than one’s own. Although some strategies have been developed for increasing pre-service and in-service teachers’ intercultural competence, properly implementing these strategies remains a problem in pre-service teacher education. It seems that more attention is needed to this problem in order to ensure that all pre-service teachers (PSTs) acquire the understandings and abilities to teach culturally diverse student populations.

In this paper, I extend Alred et al.’s (2006) above definition of intercultural competence based upon my research findings and the guiding ideas detailed in my conceptual framework. I

suggest that intercultural competence begins with a foundation of cultural noticing, and moves into action through cultural responding. Drawing upon my findings, I present cultural noticing as a person's ability to notice details about cultural context<sup>11</sup>. By cultural context I mean the cultural practices, values and behaviors a group of individuals engage in within a particular social context at a particular point in time. I present the idea of cultural responding as actions a person takes or adapts as a result of cultural noticing. Gay (2010) describes this responding quality as part of culturally responsive teaching, in which a teacher uses students' cultural knowledge, cultural practices, and prior experiences as (s)he constructs her teaching practice as a means of making learning more effective for students. In the present study, some PSTs adapt their teaching practices to respond to the cultural context they encounter in Mexico. By "responding" I mean that these PSTs were not working to force their students to adapt to their culture, rather they adapted their own teaching practices to be responsive to the students they were teaching and their cultural practices. Of course, there may be cases in which a PST chooses not to modify their teaching practice to respond to a particular cultural context. It is possible that after reflecting on one's own values that modifying one's response based on cultural context is not possible. This is completely acceptable, as intercultural competence highlights the importance of understanding and negotiation, not blind adaptation or abandonment of one's deepest values (Alred et al., 2006).

It should be noted that the word "competence" as I construct it does not imply that there is an end state that can ever be reached. Rather, developing intercultural competence is an ongoing process for all people at all times that many PSTs happen to locate through specific activities (Milner, 2003). PSTs develop intercultural competence by engaging in activities in which they attend to their capacity to engage in cultural noticing and cultural responding.

It is important to clarify what I mean by noticing and responding to students' cultural practices. As Gutierrez and Rogoff (2003) explain, cultural practices are activities a person engages in as a result of participation in a particular cultural community over time. Engagement in these practices is not static or located within individuals, but rather dynamic and may vary from one individual to another as the context for participation changes. This clarification is important to understand how and why a PST can respond to the cultural context of the classroom when acting with intercultural competence.

International education scholars have long-advocated study abroad programs as an effective pathway to increase intercultural competence because these programs are designed as cultural immersion experiences, in which participants are immersed in a cultural context outside of their own (Cushner & Brennan, 2007; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Merryfield, 2000; West, 2009). Study abroad programs for teacher education students have been in existence since at least the early 1970s, most frequently taking the form of international student teaching (IST) placements (Sleeter, 2000). Even early studies suggest that study abroad participants develop an increased ability to notice details about cultural context (Billingmeier & Forman, 1975; Nash, 1976; Pfnister, 1972).

ISTs may be powerful learning experiences for PSTs for two reasons. First, as cultural immersion experiences, participants are engaged in learning through affective, behavioral and cognitive domains (Cushner, 2007). Learning in these three separate domains can be distinguished in the following way: cognitive learning relates to information learned; affective learning relates to a learner's feelings of value or worth about this information, and behavioral learning relates to new actions that the learner can take as a result of the learning experience (Sanders & Wiseman, 1990). This is different from the learning that takes place in most

domestic college classrooms, which is typically only cognitive (Talbert-Johnson, 2009; Wang & Talbert-Johnson, 2011).

The second reason why ISTs may be powerful for many PSTs is that cultural immersion experiences outside one's own home country appear to have more meaning for participants who are members of a dominant cultural group, such as White U.S. Americans (Marx & Moss, 2011). This seems to be the case because it is the first time many of them experience being a cultural outsider: someone who is not a member of a society's dominant culture (Zeichner & Melnick, 1996). Although some U.S. colleges and universities offer cultural immersion experiences domestically in communities that are predominantly African American or Latino, or on Native American Indian reservations, White students in these domestic experiences still see themselves as part of the dominant culture in the society, and see the members of the community they are visiting as the cultural outsiders (Marx & Moss, 2011).

In recent years, some leaders in the field of pre-service teacher education have begun to question whether the intercultural competence some PSTs seem to develop through IST programs helps them to bridge the cultural divide they encounter in U.S. urban classrooms. Global and international education scholarship supports this assertion, suggesting that study abroad program alumni may be more likely to recognize that multiple realities can exist within a U.S. community (Merryfield, 2001) and they may be more likely to become more supportive of U.S. multicultural education initiatives (Mahon & Cushner, 2007). However, multicultural education scholarship suggests that teaching may be too context-specific of an endeavor for the lessons learned in an international classroom to transfer to future practice in U.S. urban classrooms (Alfaro & Quesada, 2010; Cruickshank & Westbrook, 2013; Gay, 2014). By context-specific, I mean that a teacher's decisions and actions should respond to the social context of their

classroom, including the cultural practices, values, and behaviors of the students in their room as well as larger social forces rising from the community, state, and nation (Milner, 2010a). Given these conflicting views about how effective ISTs can be in developing the intercultural competence PSTs need to succeed in U.S. urban classrooms, it is important to listen to what PSTs say they actually learn about intercultural competence from their IST experiences and what connections they make to teaching in U.S. classrooms.

In this study, I focus on what PSTs say they learned about intercultural competence during a month-long IST placement in Mexico City, Mexico because short-term study abroad opportunities are increasingly viable ways for PSTs to study abroad (Johnson & Battalio, 2008). I highlight three key findings. First, many PSTs say that the cultural noticing they engage in occurs outside of the student-teaching classroom. Participation in cultural activities outside of teaching seems to help PSTs develop capacities in cultural noticing. Second, PSTs who were part of a separate, year-long program that presented teaching as a context-specific endeavor seem to engage in more cultural noticing than other PSTs in Mexico, and sometimes even engage in cultural responding as a result of what they notice. The third finding is that even when circumstances seem very favorable, some PSTs seem to miss opportunities for developing intercultural competence in Mexico. Overall, listening to what PSTs say they actually learn about intercultural competence during this month-long program is important because it allows me to conceptualize intercultural competence in a new manner: as a process of cultural noticing and cultural responding.

## **2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review for this study was a systematic and thematic review of relevant literature from 2003 to 2013 on the topic of developing intercultural competence through among PSTs through IST programs. I selected this time period and type of review as I was interested in recent work that examined development of intercultural competence among PSTs. I searched the following four databases: Google Scholar, Web of Science, Springer Link, and JSTOR. In my search I used the following key words: “pre-service teacher education” and either “study abroad” or “international field experience.” Additionally I added the following set of key words to each search: "cross-cultural," “intercultural,” “multicultural,” “diversity,” "cultural awareness," and "cultural competence". I used these keywords to limit my review to research that most closely matched my topic. My database search yielded a total of forty-five empirical research studies and eighteen conceptual or descriptive works. I later added 11 additional ancestral works to my set for a total of seventy-four relevant documents. The ancestral works were those that did not surface in my systematic database search (primarily due to their publication date) but have shaped my research to date in some important way.

From this collection of seventy-four documents, I then narrowed my selection to include only empirical research articles where study participants were all exclusively PSTs participating in an IST program. Studies where participants were also participating in other study abroad activities such as coursework at a foreign university were excluded, as were studies about IST programs that tied to any specific content area preparation, such as foreign language teacher preparation. I narrowed my literature review in this way because I wanted to exclude programs whose goals may be significantly different than PST preparation for intercultural competence in U.S. urban classrooms. Twenty-five research articles emerged from this systematic selection.

The studies in this review suggest two broad ideas about developing intercultural competence through IST programs. First, many studies suggest that IST programs may enable PSTs to develop intercultural competence (Cruickshank & Westbrook, 2013; Faulconer, 2003; Lupi et al., 2012; Mahon & Cushner, 2007; Marx & Moss, 2011; Sahin, 2008; Santoro & Major, 2012; Sharma et al., 2013; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Willard-Holt, 2001; Zhao et al., 2009). All of these studies used qualitative methods such as analyzing PST interviews, student journals, course assignments, program evaluations and researcher field notes. The number of participants in these studies ranges from three to fifty-six. Marx and Moss (2011) also administered the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) survey to their participant at various points during her program, making theirs a mixed methods study. The second broad idea suggested by the studies reviewed is that IST experiences may influence the teaching practice of PSTs in a number of ways that would benefit culturally diverse students (Brindley et al., 2009; Cruickshank & Westbrook, 2013; DeVillar & Jiang, 2009; Faulconer, 2003; Hopkins-Gillespie, 2012; Jiang et al., 2010; Karaman, 2010; Mahon & Cushner, 2007; Malewski & Phillion, 2009; Miller & Gonzalez, 2010; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Sahin, 2008; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007; Willard-Holt, 2001). All of these studies also used qualitative methods such as analyzing PST interviews, student journals, course assignments, program evaluations and researcher field notes to study between three and fifty-six participants, with the exception of one study. Miller and Gonzalez (2010) conducted a qualitative analysis of 87 PST structured written reflections and a quantitative analysis using a pre- / post- survey with Likert scale items. These studies suggest that PST teaching practices may be influenced in the following ways. The cross-cultural comparisons PSTs make through their IST experiences may clarify their overall understanding of diverse cultures and cultural practices in their home country (Brindley et al., 2009; Cruickshank

& Westbrook, 2013; Karaman, 2010; Mahon & Cushner, 2007; Sahin, 2008; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007). PSTs who participate in IST experiences may develop an increased commitment to acknowledge and engage with diversity in the classroom (Mahon & Cushner, 2007; Willard-Holt, 2001). They may develop an improved understanding of how second language learning impacts a child's classroom experience (DeVillar & Jiang, 2009; Faulconer, 2003; Jiang et al., 2010; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008). They may develop an increased ability to vary teaching and communication strategies to support diverse populations (Hopkins-Gillespie, 2012; Malewski & Phillion, 2009; Miller & Gonzalez, 2010). And finally, they may display an increased ability to distinguish between a student's engagement in cultural practices unfamiliar to the teacher and a student's learning disabilities (Malewski & Phillion, 2009).

Two themes emerged through this review of literature that are relevant to the study at hand. First, some studies point to the idea that participants in IST programs require specific types of support in order to develop intercultural competence. Without this support, growth in intercultural competence may be limited. And second, the literature reveals that IST experiences are not homogenous in nature: individual participant differences inform a participant's development of intercultural competence. These two themes – the need for specific types of support, and the individual differences that can shape a participant's IST experience – will be discussed here in more depth.

### **2.1.1 Growth in Intercultural Competence Requires Support**

Many studies in this literature review offer findings that underscore the need for pre-trip preparation that introduces the concept of intercultural competence, on-going reflection during the experience, and de-briefing after the IST experience in order for PSTs to develop



intercultural competence through IST programs (Johnson & Battalio, 2008; Karaman & Tochen, 2010; Mahon & Cushner, 2007; Marx & Moss, 2011; Santoro & Major, 2012; Willard-Holt, 2001). All of these studies used qualitative methods such as analyzing PST interviews, student journals, course assignments, program evaluations, and researcher field notes to study between one and fifty participants. Other studies emphasize the importance of focusing on the specifics of the reflection process itself in order to help PSTs to make sense of their cultural experience and promote the development of intercultural competence (Brindley et al., 2009; Hopkins-Gillespie, 2012; Jiang & DeVillar, 2011; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Sharma et al., 2011; Sharma et al., 2013; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). All of these studies used qualitative methods such as analyzing PST interviews, student journals, course assignments, program evaluations, and researcher field notes to study between seventeen and seventy-six participants. Johnson and Battalio (2008) also administered the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) survey to ten participants before and after their IST program, making theirs a mixed methods study.

A number of studies shed light on the role program support plays in developing intercultural competence among PSTs in IST programs. Santoro and Major (2012) interviewed fifteen Australian PSTs who completed IST experiences in Korea and India ranging from three to four weeks in duration. Their findings indicate that many of the PSTs were pushed beyond their comfort zone and overwhelmed by the context of their teaching placement, particularly those placed in Indian orphanages and Indian schools for special needs children. Many of these PSTs appeared to learn very little about difference and diversity during their program. Findings suggest that a lack of intercultural competence preparation before their placement, few

opportunities for structured guidance and reflection during the program, and lack of post-trip debriefing as possible causes for this low level of learning.

Mahon and Cushner (2007) analyzed the journals and post-trip evaluations of fifty U.S. PSTs who participated in IST experiences arranged through a U.S. multi-university consortium. Study findings suggest that pre-departure orientation, structured reflections during the experience, and a debriefing related to intercultural competence are all essential to develop intercultural competence among PSTs. Furthermore, this study suggests that when this support is not in place, most PSTs fail to independently reflect on aspects of their IST unless they have an extremely good or extremely bad day. Additionally, findings suggest that PSTs who are completely cut off from program support during their IST experience have more difficulty adjusting to their IST setting than those who keep in contact with program staff. And finally, this study suggests that without reflection activities led by program staff, some PSTs are unable to make sense of negative experiences and miss cultural nuances of their IST experience.

Johnson and Battalio (2008) studied a group of ten U.S. PSTs who completed a six week experience in Scotland. In this mixed methods study, the researchers administered the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to all participants before and after the program and analyzed journal entries. Their findings revealed that only three of the ten PSTs had post-test scores indicating growth in intercultural competence through the program, and journal entries appeared to demonstrate that many students did not recognize cultural or educational differences that they observed. These findings suggest the need for PST intercultural competence preparation before IST programs, something that participants in this study did not receive. Furthermore, PSTs in the program had little opportunity to build relationships with Scottish host teachers. Findings suggest that a productive relationship between the PST and host teacher can

help the PST to make sense of educational and cultural observations, and can be an important support to PSTs in IST programs.

Marx and Moss (2011) also found that host country nationals can play an important role in a PST's intercultural competence development. As previously described, the researchers who designed this mixed methods study selected one PST to study over a semester-long IST in the United Kingdom through observations, interviews, and administering the IDI survey multiple times. They found that the key to the participant's intercultural competence growth appeared to be related to the fact that she sought out an "intercultural guide" or "cultural translator" (p. 35) at her placement who helped her make sense of the cultural context of her IST experience. These findings suggest that an intercultural guide should be part of every IST program, and that the guide should have training in providing support for intercultural competence development.

Finally, Trilokekar and Kukar (2011) found that reflection that connects a PST's individual background in terms of race, class, and gender to power structures observed in the IST placement may be essential to intercultural competence development. Through interviewing nine Canadian PSTs, this study suggests that conducting IST programs without making these intentional connections may do more harm than good, as they may reconfirm a sense of privilege that some White PSTs may feel as members of a dominant cultural group.

Overall, the studies related to this first theme appear to highlight the role program support plays in a PST's development of intercultural competence. By preparing the PST with lessons about intercultural competence before the experience, ensuring reflection and helpful intercultural guides, and debriefing afterwards, it seems that IST programs can maximize the intercultural competence development a participant experiences in an IST program. Without

these supports, the literature reveals that the IST experience may only afford the participant limited intercultural competence development.

### **2.1.2 Participants' individual qualities shape participant growth**

The second relevant theme that emerged from the review of literature is that individual participant qualities shape a participant's IST experience (Jiang et al., 2010; Johnson & Battalio, 2008; Karaman, 2010; Malewski & Phillion, 2009; Matthews & Lawley, 2011; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Zhao et al., 2009). All of these studies except used qualitative methods such as analyzing PST interviews, student journals, course assignments, program evaluations, and researcher field notes to study between one and thirty-nine participants. As previously described, Johnson and Battalio (2008) also administered the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) survey to their participants before and after their IST program, making this a mixed methods study.

Two studies highlight the role of previous PST experiences on the development of intercultural competence through an IST program. Karaman (2010) conducted in-depth interviews and collected participant observation notes about one PST who completed a semester-long placement in Ecuador. Findings indicate that a PST's understanding of culture and cultural differences draws upon both current and previous experiences of cultural difference. Similarly, in the previously described study conducted by Johnson and Battalio (2008), the authors found that participants with previous international experiences appeared to experience more intercultural competence development during their IST program than participants with no previous international experience. Both studies suggest that multiple international experiences can continue to benefit a PST as he or she prepares to enter a culturally diverse U.S. classroom.

The literature suggests that a participant's interest in IST programs and their emotional preparedness to experience intercultural competence development may also be factors. Three studies call attention to the self-selective nature of IST program participants (Johnson & Battalio, 2008; Matthews & Lawley, 2011; Zhao et al., 2009). These studies offer that participants expect to experience intercultural growth during their IST, and this openness itself may lead them to experience more growth than PSTs who do not choose to teach outside their home country. Similarly, Jiang et al. (2010) suggests that a PST's emotional preparedness may be a significant factor in what they are able to learn during an IST experience. These findings indicate that an individual's development of intercultural competence through an IST experience may not be completely in the hands of the teacher educators who develop and lead the program.

Finally, two studies highlight the role that a participant's race, gender, and social class play on the development of intercultural competence through IST programs. Malewski and Phillion (2009) conducted individual and group interviews with 39 PSTs and analyzed both course work and journal documents. Their findings suggest that the experience of being a cultural outsider in a new cultural context helps PSTs see the role of gender norms in a society, how race influences their home society, and how social class constructs a person's life experience. Trilokekar and Kukar (2011) conducted in-depth interviews with nine PSTs. They found that the construction of a PST's racial and cultural identity in a different cultural context was a central aspect of the IST experience. Furthermore, this study suggests that IST experiences may significantly differ for white and non-White students, thereby shaping development of intercultural competence.

Overall, the studies related to this second literature theme call attention to myriad individual factors that shape what a participant learns during an IST experience. It seems that

even if IST programs offer the highest caliber experience, individual participant qualities may still lead to variations in a PST's development of intercultural competence. The literature in this section suggests that future studies must attend to these factors as researchers in the field attempt to understand what PSTs actually learn about intercultural competence through IST programs.

## **2.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

I draw from three conceptual frameworks to analyze data in the present study: Gay (2010); Delpit (2006); and Gonzalez et al. (2005). These frameworks all relate to issues of culture and difference, and allow me to make sense of how my participants understand their IST experiences. Each of the frameworks adds to my conceptualization of intercultural competence as beginning with a foundation of cultural noticing and moving into action through cultural responding. Cultural noticing is a person's ability to notice details about cultural context. Cultural responding is a person's ability to take or adapt an action as a result of cultural noticing. The culturally responsive pedagogy framework described by Gay (2010) offers that successful teaching of culturally diverse students requires that teachers should demonstrate caring for students, be proficient in communicating across cultures, and be able to adapt both curriculum and instruction to respond to students' needs, experiences, and cultural backgrounds. This framework asserts that a teacher's ability to do this presumes that (s)he has critical cultural awareness: in other words, an understanding that all teaching and learning experiences are cultural practices, and reflect the cultural values of the teacher conducting the experience. The funds of knowledge framework presented by Gonzalez et al. (2005) suggests that teachers should spend time learning about their students' households and communities, and then draw from these

“funds of knowledge” that their students possess in the classroom. This calls for a teacher’s ability to translate ideas from one context and use them in another, so that classroom learning can be scaffolded upon a student’s prior knowledge. Finally, the codes of power framework detailed by Delpit (2006) emphasizes that teachers must help students to express themselves not only in ways familiar to them but also in ways that society requires as well. By teaching both forms, teachers help their students to understand the “codes of power” which exist in every classroom and society as a whole. Delpit argues that a teacher’s ability to do this depends on his/her intercultural communication skills, as they must explain these codes to students in a way that makes sense to them. Delpit’s contribution to my conceptual framework is also important because she acknowledges that in U.S. society, these codes of power are race-related. White teachers do not always recognize the power they hold in classrooms and society as members of the U.S. dominant culture. As 83% of U.S. teachers are White, this is an important idea in understanding power dynamics in classrooms (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012b).

### **2.2.1 Culturally responsive teaching framework**

The culturally responsive teaching framework (Gay, 2010) suggests that successful teaching in culturally diverse classrooms involves three components. First, teachers much actively care for their students as people. They cannot simply have passive feelings of care for them and decide this suffices to support their students’ academic success and well being. Second, teachers must learn how to communicate with their students, regardless of any cultural divide that may exist between them. This communication is essential to students’ academic success, as even at the most elementary level students must understand the lesson being taught in order to learn. Third, teachers must adapt both their curriculum and their instruction to respond to the needs,

experiences, and cultural backgrounds of their students. A teacher's ability to do this rests upon his or her understanding that all people come with their own values and cultural practices, and that no one cultural system is better than any other (Gay, 2010; Grant & Sleeter, 2011). People who lack this understanding may judge other cultures as inferior to theirs instead of seeing them as simply different (Banks, 2009). This framework helps me to shape my conceptualization of cultural noticing, as cultural noticing involves an awareness that multiple cultural contexts exist. It also helps me to shape my conceptualization of cultural responding, as cultural responding involves a teacher actively modifying their curriculum and instruction to respond to the values and cultural practices of their students.

### **2.2.2 Funds of knowledge framework**

The second conceptual framework that supports this study is the funds of knowledge framework (Gonzalez et al., 2005). This framework highlights a person's ability to gather information from one culture and relate it to information in a different culture (Byram, Nichols, & Stevens, 2001). This capacity is particularly important for teachers, as some scholarship suggests teachers are cultural workers who must cross social arrangements to gather and share cultural knowledge (Guilherme, 2002). The funds of knowledge framework (Gonzalez et al., 2005) highlights the importance of cultural translation ability among teachers as a means to support the academic achievement of culturally diverse students. These authors originally conducted ethnographic research in households of the Mexican American working class community in Tucson, Arizona and used the gathered information to inform teaching practices in the community (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). The gathered information, or funds of knowledge, represents both historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills in their



students' community considered essential for household and individual functioning such as farming, economics, childcare, and construction practices (Gonzalez et al., 2005). These funds of knowledge were used by participating classroom teachers to modify both teaching content and practices in an effort to draw upon what their students brought with them to the classroom. Teachers who participated in the original Funds of Knowledge project in Tucson said that the information they learned about their students and their lives influenced how they taught, how they thought about their students, and how they thought about their students' families (Messing, 2005). This framework shapes how I conceptualize cultural responding, as cultural responding can involve translating ideas from students' backgrounds, experiences, cultural practices and values into a teacher's classroom practice.

### **2.2.3 Codes of power framework**

The last conceptual framework that supports the ideas in this study is the codes of power framework (Delpit, 2006). This framework details five issues of power that impact classroom pedagogy. First, issues of power are enacted in classrooms through dynamics such as that between teachers and students, in decisions such as which information textbooks present, and in the overall school culture regarding what "normal" student behavior is. Second, rules exist about how to participate in this power dynamic and involve ways of talking, writing, dressing, and interacting. Third, the rules of the culture of power mirror the rules of the culture that has the most power in society. In the U.S., whites comprise the dominant culture group so being successful in school means following the values and cultural practices that Whites observe. As 83% of all U.S. teachers are White but only 30% of public school students in urban areas are white, the majority of students in urban areas must learn how to be successful according to the

rules of a culture that is not their own (U. S. D. o. E. National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Fourth, this framework explains that if you are not a member of the dominant cultural group, explicitly being told the rules of that culture helps a cultural outsider succeed. And finally, those with the power, in this case Whites, are usually the least willing to acknowledge that power and rules exist at all. Those with the least power are most likely to acknowledge it. In addition to explaining these issues, the codes of power framework explains explicitly why teachers must develop intercultural communicative ability.

Intercultural communicative ability is the ability to effectively communicate with people of different cultures (Ladson-Billings, 1999). In the codes of power framework, Delpit (2006) explains why intercultural communicative ability is particularly important for teachers by drawing upon the work of Gee (1989a, 1989b) and his notion of Discourse. Gee (1989b) asserts that Discourse is “a way of saying, writing, doing, being, valuing and believing within a certain group of people,” and that people can only learn to communicate within the bounds of a Discourse (p. 6). All people have primary Discourses that they learn at home, and secondary Discourses that are associated with social institutions such as schools or churches (Gee, 1989a). Some Discourses are more socially dominant than others, and are attached to social groups such as cultural groups (Gee, 1989b). When a person’s primary Discourse is not the same as the socially dominant secondary Discourse they must use, they may have problems accessing social power or economic success unless they learn how to communicate well in this secondary Discourse (Delpit, 1992).

One role of a teacher is to teach students how to successfully communicate using this secondary Discourse, which calls upon a teacher to effectively use the primary discourse of his/her students to explain rules and ideas (Delpit, 2006). In other words, it requires that a

teacher have intercultural communicative ability. This may be quite challenging for some teachers, as communicating in the primary discourse of culturally diverse students requires the teacher to become intimately familiar with the lives and communities of these students – something many White teachers are simply not willing to do (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Teachers who have intercultural communicative ability use two main strategies to communicate with students whose primary Discourse is not the same as the secondary Discourse they must learn (Delpit, 2006). First, teachers can modify the Discourse they personally use in the classroom to make it more relevant to students' lives. Second, teachers with intercultural communicative ability acknowledge to students that multiple discourses exist, pointing out inequality in the social system. By doing so and then showing students how to “cheat” this system, teachers can help students move into positions with more social power.

The codes of power framework shapes how I conceptualize cultural responding, as cultural responding can involve adapting one's communication of ideas to be understood by people with different cultural backgrounds. It also highlights the power White teachers have in U.S. classrooms, even if they are unable to see the power they hold themselves. With the components of my conceptual framework established, the discussion now shifts to the methods I used to conduct this research study.

## **2.3 METHODS**

### **2.3.1 Researcher positionality**

Dangers can emerge for researchers “when they do not pay careful attention to their own and others’ racialized and cultural systems of coming to know, knowing, and experiencing the world” (Milner 2007, p388). As a means to guard against these dangers, I consider the personal experiences and epistemological positions that may influence my research. I am a White U.S. American female and I was a classroom teacher for fourteen years before turning to education research. As a White person, I have the privileges associated with being part of the dominant culture in U.S. society: the cultural practices I follow and the values I hold are shared with the majority of U.S. Americans and they are reflected in social institutions such as public schools and other civic organizations (Delpit, 2006). I am rarely questioned about my actions and intentions because most other Americans implicitly understand the cultural bases behind what I do.

Although I am a member of the dominant cultural group in the U.S., I also have had some experiences with respect to culture and race in educational settings that give me a unique stance as a White American and a researcher. Two experiences stand out as shaping my research stance and agenda. First, I spent a year and a half working as a teacher at a home for orphaned children in rural Honduras directly after college. This was my first experience being outside of the dominant culture and I learned how to adapt my behavior to respond to this cultural context. Many of these adaptations related to the more defined gender roles I encountered as compared to

the U.S. Mid-Atlantic region from which I came. This experience opened my eyes to the fact that differences in cultural practices and values exist and can significantly influence how people interact with one another. As a member of the dominant cultural group in the U.S., these differences had been largely invisible to me, even though I grew up with both White and African American neighbors.

The second experience that shaped my stance and agenda as a researcher was my first U.S. teaching position. I worked at a public high school in Washington, DC where the majority of the staff and students were African American. Although working in Honduras helped me to understand that differences in cultural practices and values exist, working in DC opened my eyes to the fact that these differences didn't only exist between people from different countries, they also existed within my own country, within my own neighborhood, and indeed within the school building in which I taught. Until this point I had no idea that culturally diverse Americans may engage in cultural practices or hold values different than the ones I held as a White American. Thankfully, I had a wonderful mentor teacher who was an African American woman. By noting how she interacted with both staff and students, I learned about how adapt my behavior and interactions to respond to the African American environment in which I worked. For example, I learned to put much more emphasis on cultivating good relationships than I was used to doing in predominantly White environments. My experiences in Honduras and in DC have guided me to study and bring to light the idea that differences in cultural practices and values are real, they significantly impact what teachers do in classrooms, and they are largely invisible to many White Americans.

Of the twenty-two participants in this research project, there are seventeen White females, four White males, and one African American male. Most of the White participants

probably share some of my experiences as a White American: one of relative privilege within our country as we are members of the dominant cultural group. These PSTs grew up in a society where their cultural practices and values were usually not questioned because they were shared by other white Americans and were reflected in U.S. social institutions such as schools and government organizations. For many of these participants, traveling to Mexico represented the first time they were outside of the dominant culture. It may have been the first time that their actions and values were not implicitly understood by most people with whom they interacted. And although as an African American, Cameron was already outside of the dominant cultural group in the U.S., this was also his first time outside of U.S. borders, and exposed him to different cultural practices and values than he was familiar with as well.

Being part of a dominant cultural group makes it dangerously easy for me to interact with others without critically thinking about my interactions as particular cultural practices and reflecting specific values. In my research, I have to be careful not to make presumptions about the sense others make of their experiences. This idea alone draws me to qualitative research, as this type of research seeks to understand the sense people make of their own experiences in the context in which they occur (Hatch, 2002). As many of the participants in this research study are White American females like myself, I am further compelled to closely follow qualitative methods for this research project. These methods bring to light the sense others make of their experiences, and steer me away from the dangerous presumption that all White American females share my views and ideas regarding culture and race. I actually think pursuing my research questions would be easier to do with more male participants or more culturally diverse participants, as I would not be so tempted to fall into the trap of blindly presuming that the participants share my viewpoints because we have the same cultural background or gender.

### **2.3.2 Ethnographic methods studies**

The research question for this qualitative study asks, ““What do PSTs say they learn about intercultural competence during an international student teaching experience?” As this research question indicates, I seek to share the sense participants make of an IST experience in their own words, as people telling their stories is a window into their consciousness (Seidman, 2006). Remaining aware of my positionality as a researcher and rigorously following a well-designed qualitative study design are important pieces to my ability to do so. I have chosen to conduct an ethnographic methods study to answer this research question, because this type of study allows me to draw upon multiple data sources to help me construct the sense my participants make of their IST experience in their own words and in their own voices (Hatch, 2002). As an ethnographic methods study, data were generated through the process of fieldwork, and as the researcher, I was immersed in a social setting for an extended time (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007) and generated a range of data about participants, but principally interviews and participant observation data (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This study design is interpretive, as the research question asks how a specific context shapes participant meaning (Borko, Whitcomb, & Byrnes, 2008; Shulman, 1986). The study also has a naturalistic research design, as it generates data from participants in a natural setting, illuminates how they make sense of their experiences, and draws upon inductive data analysis to arrive at data themes (Hatch, 2002).

As a researcher employing ethnographic methods, I am indeed the main data collection instrument (Walcott, 2005) and it is important that I consider the assumptions I carry with me about the participants I study. As no individual is without values or beliefs, I can work against bias in my research by developing a strong sense of my personal identity and understanding how this identity influences my data collection and analysis (Graue & Walsh, 1998). This means in

addition to understanding my researcher positionality from the perspective of race and culture, I also consider how my personal identity and interactions with the participants influenced my data collection and analysis.

I've also spent the past three years teaching and supervising PSTs at the graduate level, which made me feel more comfortable in Mexico with the college professors who led the trip than with the college student participants themselves. I actively worked to counter-act this tension by intentionally distancing myself from the trip leaders while with the PSTs, spending unstructured time with the PSTs in activities of their choosing, and generally making it known that I had no power or authority over them during our time in Mexico. But even in spite of these efforts, the participants may still see me as an authority figure and may not reveal to me what they truly think about their IST experience.

### **2.3.3 Ethical considerations**

I attended to ethical considerations related to this study by talking to all participants ahead of time and reminding them of their free will in choosing to participate in this study. Twenty-two participants out of a possible twenty-four consented to participate. As a strong Spanish speaker, I attended to reciprocity in my research by offering to translate for all students (regardless of whether or not they participated in the study) whenever I could. Quite a few students took advantage of this offer as I helped them barter for souvenirs in the market place, escorted two of them to the pharmacy when they were ill, and communicated with their host parents on their behalf when a misunderstanding occurred. I also translated for the two college professors on almost every excursion, which seemed to make my presence on the trip more of benefit for them and less of a burden.



## **2.3.4 Setting**

### **2.3.4.1 Participants**

Participants in this study are all undergraduate seniors majoring in teacher education at Rolling Hills University (RHU) who provided informed consent. (All names for universities, schools, and individuals mentioned have been given pseudonyms.) Interview data reveals that participants are all between twenty-one and twenty-three years old, excepting one twenty-six year old participant. Participants fulfill the final four weeks of their twelve-week student-teaching requirement by participating in this program. Twenty-four PSTs were selected for the IST program on the basis of completing an application and paying a deposit. No applicants were turned away. Within this group, there are eighteen white females, five white males, and one African American male. Twenty-two of these PSTs consented to participate in this research study: seventeen white females, four white males, and one African American male. The pre-test groups are explained more fully in the survey section, and RHU's University in School (UAS) program is described below in this methods section. Data generated from the following nine participants are included in this study:

Annie – white female, early childhood certification candidate, blue pre-test group

Cameron – African American male, elementary and special education certification candidate, RHU UAS program member, green pre-test group

Jenna – white female, early childhood certification candidate, blue pre-test group

Lauren – elementary and Spanish education certification candidate, pink pre-test group

Lisa – white female, elementary certification candidate, blue pre-test group

Marlena – white female, early childhood and special education certification candidate, RHU UAS program member, pink pre-test group

Michelle – white female, elementary certification candidate, RHU UAS program member, green pre-test group

Natalie – white female, elementary certification candidate, green pre-test group

Samuel – secondary English education certification candidate, pink pre-test group

#### **2.3.4.2 University**

The RHU website<sup>12</sup> offers a basic description of the university. RHU is a residential and public university located in a rural area about fifty miles away from a major U.S. city in the Mid-Atlantic region. Approximately 90% of RHU students are state residents.

#### **2.3.4.3 Mexico City IST program**

The RHU PSTs are prepared and supported in the Mexico City IST program by university staff. Program director Dr. Alan Jacobson explains why RHU offers the program and why PSTs choose to participate. He explains,

The Mexico program is powerful, life-changing. Students get exposure to differences: different cultures, and how different people live. It helps students learn about themselves. It helps them learn about developing nations, poverty, and social justice. Students go to learn about a different culture and themselves. They also go because it improves their resume, and it's fun (Pre-trip field notes, 08.17.12).

As Dr. Jacobson describes, RHU offers this program to PSTs to expose them to cultural differences and help them to grow as individuals. PSTs choose to go for these reasons, but also because potential employers like seeing international experiences on a PST's resume and because working and studying in Mexico for their last month of their undergraduate education seems to be like an enjoyable way to complete their degree. PSTs prepare for this experience by

attending six monthly pre-departure meetings on the campus of RHU that focus on logistics, program expectations and requirements. They also work together in small groups to research and present introductory tourist-type information related to Mexican politics, culture, and history during the pre-trip meetings. The group travels together to Mexico City, Mexico for four and a half weeks with two RHU professors. Program director Dr. Alan Jacobson is a Professor of Early Childhood and Elementary Education at RHU and has been taking RHU PSTs to student teach at the Benito Juarez International School (JIS) in Mexico City, Mexico since 1993. He is assisted as by Dr. Maria Mancuso, a Professor of Special Education at RHU. This is her second RHU Mexico City trip and she has also led groups of RHU PSTs on two-week field experiences in Europe.

While PSTs are in Mexico, they live in pairs or groups of four with Mexican families and work at JIS as student-teachers every day for four weeks. Most of the host families speak some English, have a connection to JIS, and have hosted RHU PSTs in this program for many years. They are paid a stipend by RHU for room, two meals a day, and laundry access. The Mexican families do not host PSTs over most weekends, as the group travels to Mexican cultural sites and stays in hotels.

The Benito Juarez International School (JIS) is a private international school located in Mexico City. The school's website<sup>13</sup> offers introductory information about the school. JIS was founded by international businessmen living in Mexico over 100 years ago. The school is a bilingual school in English and Spanish and offers an American-style educational program to over 2,600 students in grades K-12. The JIS student body is 58% Mexican, 28% percent U.S. American, and the remainder represents over forty other nationalities. JIS students are regularly accepted into competitive universities in the United States, Mexico, and other countries.

Approximately seventy-five percent of teachers and administrators are Mexican, twenty-two percent are U.S. American, and three percent are Canadian or English. A full ninety-five percent of the non-teaching staff at the school is Mexican, and the remaining five percent are U.S. American.

#### **2.3.4.4 University at School (UAS) program**

RHU's UAS program is collaboratively developed and implemented by the university and the Primrose School District. This program is completely separate from RHU's Mexico City IST program. Primrose is an urban cluster, as the city's population is 14,038 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Six study participants were part of both the UAS program and the Mexico City IST program while completing PST coursework at RHU. RHU's UAS program is a context-specific teacher education program. By this I mean that it is intentionally designed to focus PST attention on contextual factors in the classroom that should inform their teaching practice.

A conference paper<sup>14</sup> describing the UAS program highlights the context-specific strategies used at RHU. First, overall, UAS promotes teaching as a process of reflective, thoughtful engagement between teachers and students rather than teaching as management of a class of students. Second, the program is organized by cohort, and all cohorts are based at one elementary school in Primrose. This makes the processes of reflection and collaboration routine and encourages PSTs to learn from one another. Third, dialogue is modeled in frequent cohort meetings that promote enthusiasm and discussion of beliefs. And finally, cohort meetings also intentionally celebrate PST successes, review their progress, and encourage the sharing of effective techniques.

Dr. Watson, a RHU faculty member in the UAS program, describes the UAS prerequisites and the program itself (phone conversation, 12.01.14). UAS participants complete

the following RHU teacher education requirements before they enter UAS program: a twenty-hour site observation in a school that has at least 15% non-white students, a three credit multicultural children's literature course, a three credit cultural awareness course, a three credit math methods course, a three credit science methods course, and a one-credit math / science field experience that is taken concurrently with the math and science courses. The cultural awareness course focuses on understanding cultural diversity, one's own cultural identity and the role of socio-cultural context in the classroom. The UAS program itself is one semester in length, and is comprised of three courses weighted at three credits each: language arts, reading methods, and social studies methods. These courses are all taught on site at the K-6 school in Primrose, and classes are frequently combined and co-taught by RHU faculty members. The first nine weeks of the semester consist of classes that are held twice a week at the Primrose school for ninety-five minutes per class. PSTs have all three courses on the same two days. Many days involve observing RHU faculty teach Primrose K-6 students and discussing PST observations in later classes. The last three weeks of the program are a field experience in these same Primrose K-6 classrooms. PSTs use action research methodology to learn from their own work, and they integrate theory and practice to make sense of both. After completion of this program, UAS PSTs have the option of returning to the same K-6 school for the sixteen-week student teaching experience that all RHU PSTs complete. PSTs who are also part of the Mexico IST program finish their final four weeks of student teaching in Mexico (phone conversation with Dr. Watson, 12.01.14).

RHU UAS program faculty lead a number of specific activities to help PSTs understand how community and social context informs the classroom (phone conversation with Dr. Watson, 12.01.14). As the three UAS courses (language arts methods, reading methods and social studies

methods) are frequently taught simultaneously, these activities are associated with multiple courses. One community-based activity requires that PSTs take a driving tour of Primrose. PSTs are given driving directions and are asked to make observations about what they see in the community. They are asked to observe details such as available housing, businesses, and places of worship. They are also asked reflection questions, such as what a family's experience in Primrose might be like if they have no car. These observations are then unpacked in a class discussion with all cohort members. UAS PSTs also complete a service-learning activity they arrive at through a problem-posing activity in their coursework. Past service learning projects have included tutoring students after school, raising money to purchase uniforms for the school's uniform closet, and bringing students to the RHU campus for a day to see what college life is like. All of these activities help the UAS PSTs notice more about cultural context during their IST experience in Mexico.

A university document<sup>15</sup> that describes the UAS program offers program goals in addition to presenting teaching as a context-specific endeavor. UAS seeks to offer a high quality clinical experience for all PSTs. The program highlights an inquiry approach to teaching, and emphasizes the support of diverse K-12 populations. The program also emphasizes the importance of content knowledge and the use of technology.

Of the nine PSTs introduced in this study, only Cameron, Michelle, and Marlena were part of the UAS program. Annie, Jenna, Lisa, Natalie, Samuel, and Lauren were not. Interestingly enough, the strengths the UAS PSTs have in noticing details in cultural context do not seem to have a connection to their IDI pre-trip survey scores. Both Cameron and Michelle were part of the pink (mid-range score) sub-group based on their IDI pre-test score. Although Marlena's score placed her in the pink (highest) group, both Samuel and Lauren also had scores

that placed them in the pink group. And as will be discussed in the findings section, both Samuel and Lauren missed information about cultural context during their IST experience in Mexico that other PSTs noticed.

### **2.3.5 Data generation**

Data for this study were generated through participant observation, interviews, analysis of student journals and lesson plans, analysis of RHU and JIS policy and program documents, and surveys. I spent over three hundred and thirty hours in participant observation, I conducted and reviewed over twenty-two hours of interviews, I transcribed and analyzed fourteen hours of interview transcripts, I analyzed twelve student journals and six lesson plans, I reviewed eighteen different policy and program documents, and I analyzed twenty-two sets of pre- and post-trip surveys. These sources were selected for this study design as ethnographic methods studies are intended to collect a range of data about participants, but draw most heavily from participant observation and interview data to answer research questions (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Survey data is also generated, which can be used as a tool in any research design (Borko et al., 2008). Drawing from this range of sources also aids me in triangulation of data, since comparing multiple data sources helps to ensure that I accurately interpret emergent data themes (Graue & Walsh, 1998) and increases the overall validity of study results (Kiely, 2005). Member checking of data occurred through a variety of ways. I frequently met with PSTs after observing them in Mexico to ask them clarifying questions about what I observed. Interview data were member checked during interviews, as I paraphrased interview responses back to participants to ensure I understood their responses. Member checking of journal data occurred via email correspondence with the participant after the trip when I had a question about something they wrote. These

member checking endeavors improved the overall credibility of my study, as participants are in the best position to judge whether or not my study results believably describe what they say they learned about intercultural competence (Creswell, 2012).

#### **2.3.5.1 Participant observation**

Participant observation is one of the two primary data sources in this ethnographic methods study. This type of data generation requires that I observe participants in a face-to-face manner over an extended period of time, I focus on a few subjects in depth and not many subjects in a superficial manner, and that I attend to narrative description of what I see as opposed to measurement description (Graue & Walsh, 1998). Participant observation took place both at the RHU pre-trip meetings and in Mexico. Participant observation at RHU occurred during the six whole group pre-departure meetings. In Mexico, I observed participants teaching in JIS classrooms, during RHU-led group meetings, and during RHU-led field trips to Mexican cultural sites.

A number of factors influenced my decision about whom to observe each day. Participants were divided into three sub-groups: blue, green, and pink. These sub-groups correspond to pre-trip survey score ranges. (This grouping process is more thoroughly explained in the survey section below.) Participant observation in the classrooms was varied initially so that I observed many participants from all three sub-groups during the first two weeks of their four-week student teaching placement. During the third week, I narrowed my field of observation to include only participants in each of the three sub-groups that seemed to be particularly rich sources of data with respect to my research question, as researchers conducting participant observation should begin by describing the wide context that frames their study and work to narrow their field as they progress (Emerson et al., 1995). During the last week and a



half of observations, I further limited the participants I observed to only those selected for a second interview during the final week of the program. (See interview section below for more detail on the interview selection process.)

### **2.3.5.2 Interviews**

Interviews are the other primary data source in this study. Informant interviews were utilized to generate participant perspectives on both the IST experience and the RHU teacher education program that sponsors it. Interviews have been found to be a particularly effective data source for examining intercultural dimensions of participant learning (Hammer, 2012b; Hendershot & Sperandio, 2009; Myers & Zaman, 2009). Interviews enable me to see the IST experience through perspectives other than my own and interviewing multiple people about developing intercultural competence help me to describe this complex process (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Interviews were conducted with participants in three separate rounds. Fewer participants were interviewed each time, in an effort to focus data generation on the most data-rich participants. For the first round, I completed a twenty-minute introductory interview with all twenty-two consenting participants during the first week of the program. These interviews allowed me to make an initial connection with each participant and gave me information to narrow my field of study. All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participant. I asked two open-ended questions about their general experience in the IST placement to date, and then two specific questions about their experience employing the developmental interviewing strategy described by Hammer (2012b). As this strategy indicates, I asked participants to describe some initial experiences they had in Mexico interacting with people culturally different than them, the strategies they used to navigate the situation, and their understanding of the situation's outcome. I focused on the use of this strategy during round one

because it may prompt participants to offer descriptions of experiences directly relevant to the development of intercultural competence (Hammer). Once all round one interviews were completed, I reviewed recordings and took notes about each participant's ability to describe intercultural experiences and the sense they made of them. The four participants in each sub-group (blue, green and pink) who used the most descriptive detail when talking about intercultural interactions were included in the second round of interviews.

The second round of interviews involved twelve participants: four participants from each of the three sub-groups. These interviews lasted about thirty minutes each and occurred during the final four days we were in Mexico. I asked interview questions related to the developmental interviewing strategy (Hammer, 2012b) as well as additional open-ended questions that enabled them to talk more widely about how they make sense of their IST experience (Graue & Walsh, 1998). As interviewing is a very formal way of communicating and it is often difficult to get participants to talk about their experiences, I used my observation field notes to prompt them to talk about how they understand their IST experience (Campbell-Galman, 2007; Graue & Walsh, 1998). Once completed, I reviewed recordings and took notes about all twelve interviews. My notes focused on each participant's ability to describe in detail the experiences they had and the sense they made of them. I used my notes from these interviews as well as my participant observation field notes to select the two participants in each sub-group that seemed to be the richest sources of data with respect to the research question. An additional participant was interviewed from the blue sub-group, as I had difficulty contacting another of the selected participants in this sub-group. Eventually all seven participants were interviewed in the third and final interview round.

The third round of interviews were conducted over the phone, four to six weeks after we

returned to the U.S., were audio-recorded, and lasted about thirty minutes each. These final interviews were conducted a month after re-entry to the U.S. because many participants have significant insights about their study abroad experience only after returning to their home environment (Bradfield-Kreider, 2001; Cushner, 2007). Participants were asked to reflect on trip experiences according to the developmental interviewing strategy (Hammer, 2012b). They also responded to open-ended questions that prompted them to reflect upon their overall trip experience. Finally, participants were asked to talk specifically about what they noticed about student cultural differences in their classroom and how they adapted their teaching to anything they noticed. These final questions were based on tenants of culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010). Field notes and participant journal entries were used as discussion prompts. All interviews from rounds one, two, and three for these seven participants were then transcribed.

#### **2.3.5.3 Student journals and lesson plans**

Journals and lesson plans developed for JIS classrooms were gathered as data on the last day in Mexico. Very few PSTs wrote out lesson plans for their JIS student teaching so this data source was not very useful. In contrast, journals were rich data sources, as participants responded to specific prompts related to the research question. Participant journals have been found to be particularly important sources of data in exploring participant development in cultural immersion experiences (Hammer, 2012b; Parker & Dautoff, 2007) as journal writing encourages participants to process and reflect on experiences (Hatch, 2002) and may help to promote intercultural competence. Participants were asked to respond to a number of structured journal prompts during the experience, as prompts that focus participants on describing experiences involving cultural differences may be effective in enabling participants to describe their own development in intercultural competence (Hammer, 2012b; Parker & Dautoff, 2007).

Participants were also directed to write specifically about their experiences teaching at JIS. Dr. Jacobson told me before we travelled that many past students used the time they travel in busses on weekend excursions to write in journals. Therefore, I directed participants to respond to a structured journal prompt every Friday when we left Mexico City by bus. I also provided them with an additional structured prompt via email to complete on their own time every Tuesday, as there was no other time the group met during the week which would have allowed for journal writing. Sample prompts included: 1) What experiences have you had in the past week where you think cultural differences have influenced how you and your host family interact? 2) What experiences have you had at your student-teaching placement this week that would not have happened if you were still teaching in the United States? 3) What experiences did you have during this past weekend's fieldtrip in which cultural differences played a role? For each of these prompts, participants were asked to explain the situation, how they navigated the situation, and the situation's outcome.

#### **2.3.5.4 Policy and program documents**

RHU and JIS policy documents as well as RHU-designed program evaluations completed by the participants were artifact data sources. RHU policy documents were collected during pre-departure meetings and after the trip. JIS policy documents were collected while in Mexico. And RHU program evaluations were completed and collected on the flight home from Mexico. These evaluations were completed anonymously, so they were of limited use as a data source for this study. These data were collected because artifact data collection is the least obtrusive way to collect data and helps me paint a rich description of context (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007). However, these data can be challenging to use as artifacts were not created in direct response to my research questions, so the information provided may only be loosely related to the study

(Hatch, 2002; Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007).

### **2.3.5.5 Surveys**

The Intercultural Development Index (IDI) survey is a fifty-question Likert scale survey with an added six demographic questions and a series of five open-ended questions at the end that ask participants to describe interactions they have had with people who are culturally different than them. Only the Likert-scale questions are used to arrive at a numerical IDI score. Participants take the survey online, and the IDI survey site calculates a score for each participant. As Hammer describes, this survey instrument is based on the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC) model (Hammer, 2012b) and gives numerical score for each participant correlating to one of the five levels of the IDC model. This survey was developed by Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003) and is based on the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) first introduced by Bennett (1986, 1993). The survey was developed to fill a gap in assessing how competent people are in working across cultures by measuring peoples' orientations towards cultural difference (Hammer, 2009).

The IDI survey was selected as the pre-trip survey tool because it is considered to be a well-tested assessment that gives a valid and reliable assessment of an individual's orientation towards cultural differences (Hammer, 2011; Hammer et al., 2003). It has been used in over forty-five journal publications (Hammer, 2012a) including four recent studies of the development of intercultural competence in PSTs (Johnson & Battalio, 2008; Mahon, 2003; Marx & Moss, 2011; Yuen & Grossman, 2009).

The IDI survey was administered as a pre-trip survey via an email link to participants one week before the IST experience. The survey results are utilized in the present study only as a means of grouping participants for observation and interviews. A comparison of the pre-trip

survey scores and associated post-trip survey scores may be presented in a future research study. Use of this pre-trip survey gave me some information about each PST's knowledge and experiences related to intercultural competence before participating in the four week IST experience in Mexico. Use of this pre-trip survey responds to a call for more studies that take pre-service teacher background knowledge into account in research design (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Zeichner, 2011). Using a non-ethnographic data source also allows me to more accurately triangulate my understanding of ethnographic data, thereby increasing the overall validity of my study results (Graue & Walsh, 1998).

Participants were divided into three sub-groups based on their IDI pre-trip score. The blue sub-group includes eight participants whose pre-test scores were among the lowest in the group. Their pre-trip scores reflected monocultural mindsets (levels 1 & 2) as described by the IDI. These scores would be common for people with little or no experience or preparation related to interacting with people culturally different than them. The green group included five students whose mid-range IDI scores reflected that they were on the "cusp of minimization," which is an emerging transitional mindset (level 3) between having a monocultural mindset and an intercultural mindset. These scores would be common for people having some experience and preparation related to interacting with people culturally different than them. The last sub-group of ten participants, the pink sub-group, had the highest scores on the IDI. Scores in this sub-group ranged between high transitional scores (level 3, minimization) and two scores in the highest category (level 5 – adaptation). These scores would be common for people who have had significant experience and preparation related to interacting with people culturally different than them. I used these sub-groups to make initial decisions about which participants I should observe and interview, so that I could attend to participant background knowledge and

experience in my analysis. Participant responses to the open-ended questions at the end of the survey were coded as qualitative data.

### **2.3.6 Data analysis**

I analyzed qualitative data using the applied thematic analysis approach described by Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012). I employed the use of NVIVO software to manage my data during the analysis process. I read the data corpus with an eye toward the research question, “What do PSTs say they learn about intercultural competence during an international student teaching experience?” Preliminary themes emerged from the data inductively by constantly comparing what I read to this research question and coding data in NVIVO for these potential themes. Next, I noted which potential themes were relevant to the research question. These themes included ideas such as, “PSTs learn about cultural differences through everyday interactions outside the classroom,” and “Many PSTs fail to notice cultural differences between U.S. classrooms and JIS classrooms.” Once relevant potential themes were identified, I translated the themes into codes with specific definitions. I then passed through the data corpus again, marking code segments in NVIVO that showed the specific attributions as defined by the codes. To confirm the validity of the codes and definitions, I waited one week then repeated this process again, passing through the data corpus and marking code segments in NVIVO that showed the specific code attributions. Waiting a week between these two passes through the data corpus improves the overall validity of my coding endeavors because I had to re-read all of the code definitions and compare them to the data segments again (Guest et al.). Repeating this process a second time improved the overall reliability of my data, or the trustworthiness that my coding process was yielding quality results because I checked to be sure that I coded all of the

data the same way both times (Bazely & Jackson, 2013). When codes were consistent, I continued coding with periodic re-checks. When codes were not consistent, I adjusted the definitions and re-coded as needed. Key codes that emerged through this process are displayed in Table 2 below. Only themes that were well-substantiated by the data were pursued. Strongest themes included those related to PSTs learning about cultural differences (COMPARE CUSTOMS, HOST, CULT AWARE). Themes related to participants making comparisons between their JIS classroom and their previous experience in U.S. schools (SCHOOL DIFF, TEACH ADAPT IN MEX, CLASS CULT) were also substantive. Analytic memoing occurred periodically throughout the coding process to explore patterns of meaning in themes and connections between them. Quotations that best illustrated each theme were selected to give voice to participants (Hendershot & Sperandio, 2009).

**Table 2:** Key Analysis Codes and Definitions

Code	Code Definition
COMPARE CUSTOMS	PST compares values, customs, beliefs, practices
HOST	Description of host family interaction
CULT AWARE	PST describes awareness of cultural differences during or after program
SCHOOL DIFF	Comparison of JIS & US curriculum, teaching style, class environment, physical space, planning expectations
TEACH ADAPT IN MEX	Adaptation to teaching between US & JIS
CLASS CULT	PST compares cultural practices or values of US and JIS students
COMMUNICATION	Ability to speak Spanish and communicate in Mexico (verbal, non-verbal)
TEACH CHANGE	PST describes a way future teaching will change as a result of program



## **2.4 FINDINGS**

Three key findings emerged from this study related to how PSTs talk about what they learned about intercultural competence through an IST program. These findings are related to the two components of intercultural competence as I conceptualize it: cultural noticing and cultural responding. To re-cap, cultural noticing is the foundational component, and is a person's ability to notice details about cultural context. Cultural responding builds upon this foundation, and involves actions that a person takes or adapts as a result of cultural noticing.

The first finding is that participation in experiences outside of teaching seem to help PSTs increase their ability to engage in cultural noticing. Second, participation in a context-specific teacher preparation program before the IST experience seems to make a difference in a PST's ability to engage in both cultural noticing and cultural responding while in Mexico. The third finding is that even when the circumstances seem very favorable, some PSTs seem to miss opportunities for engaging in cultural noticing or cultural responding.

### **2.4.1 Finding One: Participation in experiences outside of teaching seem to help PSTs increase their ability to engage in cultural noticing**

The first finding that emerged from the data is that the experiences that PSTs talk about in which they most attend to their engagement in cultural noticing seem to be cultural immersion activities that occur outside the student-teaching classroom. To re-cap, cultural immersion involves participant immersion in a cultural context outside of their own and involves affective, behavioral, and cognitive learning (Cushner, 2007). So by cultural immersion activities, I mean activities that are part of a cultural immersion experience that allow PSTs to interact with others

in a cultural context different from their own. When asked to discuss experiences in which they noticed details about cultural context during the month, PSTs frequently discussed cultural immersion activities such as exploring an open-air art market, attending a professional soccer game, visiting with a Zapotec indigenous family of artisans, and interacting with their host families in Mexico City. Overall, the many PSTs in this study find cultural immersion outside of their home country as a valuable way to develop their cultural noticing ability.

#### **2.4.1.1 Participation in cultural immersion activities**

PSTs described a number of cultural immersion activities they participated in outside of the student-teaching classroom that seemed to help them develop cultural noticing ability. Recall that PSTs develop cultural noticing ability through activities in which they attend to their ability to engage in cultural noticing (Milner, 2003). Annie is one PST who went to Mexico. She describes what she learned after spending the morning at an open-air market in Mexico City. She reflects in her journal,

Watching the lady string the microscopic beads and watching the old man carve the wood was an eye opener for me. There is so much out there culturally that I have no idea about. I want to learn more and be open-minded, and I feel that the [art market] is a place so culture-rich, that it will remind me to be open-minded and learn more about other people and myself. I learned so much about how people live and what skills people have in just one afternoon (Journal entry, 4.21.13).

In this excerpt Annie demonstrates an entry point into cultural noticing. She notices the some of the cultural practices of the artisans she meets in the art market and realizes that these cultural practices are different than what she has seen before. Exposure to these artisans helps Annie to see that there is much more for her to learn about the values and cultural practices of

people who are different from her. Attending to cultural noticing by going to the art market then reflecting on what she notices in her journal helps Annie to develop cultural noticing ability.

Many of the PSTs attended a professional league soccer game during their first week in Mexico City and described it as an overwhelming experience because they noticed so many details about cultural context. The stadium held over 100,000 fans, and the game featured two rival Mexican teams. PSTs described fans continuously chanting with choreographed motions, shaking balloons, and pounding on drums throughout the game. Police were stationed around the stadium in full riot gear. Both Michelle and Natalie describe the experience as the first time they noticed any cultural differences at all between themselves and the residents of Mexico City. I captured Natalie's reaction to the soccer game in my field notes: "Natalie told me...she had never seen anything like it....It was the first time she really felt like she was in Mexico on this trip" because the fan behavior was so different than what she had seen in the U.S. and the riot police made her so nervous (FN 8, 04.22.13). Michelle has a similar reaction:

I don't know if I would fully feel like I was in Mexico had I not gone [to the game]....I knew soccer was a big deal to them. But I didn't fully understand it until I went to the game....pictures [don't] show it justice, I took a video...but...that doesn't [capture it] either (Michelle interview 1).

Attending the soccer game and then reflecting on the experience through discussion appears to push Natalie and Michelle to notice many details about cultural context, and seem to lead them to discover that differences between cultural practices do indeed exist. As Michelle explains, pictures and videos cannot communicate her full sensory experience of attending this game. The multitude of details the PSTs notice about cultural context as a result of immersion in this activity and reflecting on it seem to enable them to attend to their ability to engage in

cultural noticing. These data suggest that attending this soccer game may have helped Natalie and Michelle develop some cultural noticing ability. This increased cultural noticing ability may help them notice differences in cultural context when working culturally diverse students in U.S. classrooms in the future.

Another cultural immersion activity that seemed to help many PSTs attend to their ability to engage in cultural noticing was the group's visit to a multi-generational Zapotec family of weavers in rural southern Mexico. Our host Faustino and his family lived in an open-air compound that included rooms where the family lived and multiple workshop rooms, all surrounding a central courtyard. The compound had no running water, and the structures were simple cement block construction. Faustino told us that everyone in the town were part of the Zapotec indigenous group, and spoke more Zapotec than Spanish. He showed the PSTs how to make dyes from plant seeds over a wood burning fire, his father showed them how to take animal wool and spin it into yarn, and both of them demonstrated how to use the hand looms to make cloth from the yarn. PSTs were able to try their hand at all of these tasks and then purchase some woven goods the family had made. I write about Jenna's reactions to this experience in the following field notes excerpt:

Jenna told me she was amazed by the simple lifestyle of the family and loved it. She said she wanted to stay with them forever....[and]...asked to have her picture taken with the women. It was really nice to see some of the students who had seemed before today to be mostly interested in partying, like Jenna, come alive when meeting Faustino's family....This encounter truly touched some of the [PSTs] on the trip. As they passed one by one [to say good bye] and kissed the women of the family on the cheek,

Stephanie, Jenna and Daphne all cried a bit - they were so taken by this experience (FN 18, 05.02-03.13).

Jenna's emotional reaction to this cultural immersion activity suggests that she was able to notice many rich details about the cultural context in which Faustino and his family lives. Attending to her ability to engage in cultural noticing with Faustino's family may help Jenna engage in more cultural noticing in the future. Participation in this activity may help Jenna notice when her U.S. students have values and cultural practices that are different from the ones with which she is familiar.

For many students in the group, the most powerful opportunity to attend to their cultural noticing capacity seems to arise from interactions with host families. In this excerpt, Annie describes a difficult misunderstanding that she had with a host parent. Annie's host sister Maria Elena had taken her, her roommate Ainsley, and fellow RHU PSTs Cameron and Charlie to a nightclub, but left the club without them. Without a working cell phone, anyone who spoke Spanish among them, or a means to get home safely, the girls decided to walk to Cameron's and Charlie's nearby apartment and sleep on their couches until the morning. Cameron's and Charlie's host mother, Franchesca, had four RHU female PSTs staying in her apartment and she hosted Cameron and Charlie in her second apartment across the hall from her. Annie describes the misunderstanding:

Franchesca has said numerous times that "if you ever need to you can crash here, it's not a problem." We took that to mean it was OK to stay at Cameron and Charlie's [apartment]....[Franchesca] came to the door and she was....yelling...things like, "Miss, you are very dumb"....She said that girls go to boys' places to [have sex with them]. So she thought we were having this big orgy....Which is the most ridiculous thing in the

world. It's not a big deal, to crash on somebody's couch doesn't mean that you are going to [have sex with them]...It was...a horrible misunderstanding (Annie interview 2).

From Annie's point of view, she and Ainsley had made a good decision to sleep on Cameron and Charlie's couches and wait until the morning to get safely home. From Franchesca's point of view, Annie and Ainsley had made a poor decision because in Mexico, girls only go into boys' apartments at night if they are going to have sexual encounters. As the adult guardian of the RHU students, Franchesca's concern was legitimate given Mexican cultural practices around appropriate behavior for young unmarried women. However, Annie simply could not see these cultural contextual details during their misunderstanding. Later, Annie reflects in her journal, "Looking back, I understand why Franchesca was upset....She thought we were going to stay at the boys' apartment so we could have a huge orgy....We just wanted a place to crash until morning when it was safe...to venture home" (Annie, journal entry, 04.21.13). Later in her journal Annie adds, "We were warned [at RHU] before we came that if you dance with – or let someone buy you drinks [in Mexico] – they are taking you home. I see why Franchesca thought that that's what we were up to by staying at the boys' house" (Annie, journal entry, 04.24.13). Through multiple journal reflections about this incident, Annie attends to her cultural noticing capacity enough to understand why Franchesca became so upset when she found Annie and Ainsley in the boys' apartment that night. The growth that Annie experienced through this incident and reflection may help her in her work as a U.S. classroom teacher in the future. Hopefully when she has a misunderstanding with a culturally diverse student or parent in the future, she will be able to notice enough about the cultural context that she will again and try to see the conflict from the other person's point of view.

#### **2.4.1.2 The value of cultural immersion experiences in developing cultural noticing ability**

Overall, PSTs emphasize the value of cultural immersion outside the U.S. as a means to develop cultural noticing ability. Cameron reflects, “We always see through our culture....I can’t see what they see, but [if I have traveled] I can hopefully think about the way they would see it [as I]...think through a situation” (Cameron Interview 3). For Cameron, travel outside the U.S. helps a person understand that people in other cultures have different perspectives. In other words, it makes him more able to notice details in cultural context. Annie agrees that cultural immersion outside the U.S. is important for developing cultural noticing ability:

To actually be submerged...in the culture, is amazing....You would still know that you are in America if you were in Texas. [In the U.S.] you are able to speak Spanish all over the place now, but it’s just not the same....[In Mexico] the buildings...look different. The grocery stores are different. Everything is just so different....And to actually be there and to get to observe it all for yourself...was life changing (Annie interview 3).

In this excerpt Annie explains that she finds cultural immersion outside of the U.S. life-changing because one is submerged in a completely different environment. This submersion seems to push her to attend to her cultural noticing ability. Cameron and Annie agree that the learning that takes place through cultural immersion outside the U.S. helps them to attend to their cultural noticing ability. Hopefully this learning will help Cameron and Annie notice details about cultural context when they work in U.S. classrooms with students with values and cultural practices different than their own.

Lisa also found cultural immersion outside the U.S. to be a powerful way to develop her cultural noticing ability. In this excerpt, Lisa explains why student teaching in Mexico was a more powerful means to develop her cultural noticing ability than her last student teaching

experience in the town of Rockbrook, near RHU. Lisa says Rockbrook is considered an urban placement by RHU. She describes Rockbrook as a town with greater cultural diversity than other nearby areas, high poverty rates, and high unemployment. Lisa compares her experience of student teaching in Rockbrook to student teaching in Mexico:

In Rockbrook, I would go home every night to my boyfriend and my apartment in Rolling Hills....If I had to live in Rockbrook while I was student teaching, it would have been an entirely different story....In Mexico, I don't go home to my apartment, I don't go home to my boyfriend. I...go home to my Mexican host mother....I couldn't use my phone, I couldn't text, so...I was [not] talking to my family all the time....With the Mexico trip....you definitely grow....[because] you are not in the comforts of your own home. (Lisa interview 3)

For Lisa, visiting Rockbrook during the day and returning home at night is no comparison to full cultural immersion in Mexico. Lisa has no escape from the intensity of a cultural context different than her own while in Mexico. As a result, she sees herself developing more cultural noticing ability in Mexico than she did in Rockbrook. This cultural noticing ability may help Lisa work with culturally diverse students in the U.S., as it may make it more likely that she will stretch beyond the comforts of her own values and cultural practices again and notice the cultural context in which her students live.

Overall many PSTs in this program agree that cultural immersion outside the U.S. is an important way to develop the cultural noticing ability that is the foundation of intercultural competence. Attending to their cultural noticing ability in Mexico may improve their ability to notice details about cultural context in the U.S. classrooms where they may teach in the future.



## **2.4.2 Finding Two: Participation in a context-specific teacher preparation program before the IST experience seems to improve a PST's capacity to engage in both cultural noticing and cultural responding while in Mexico**

The data show that PSTs who participate in a context-specific teacher preparation program before their IST experience seem to engage in more cultural noticing than other PSTs and sometimes engage in cultural responding as well. Recall that cultural noticing is a person's ability to notice details about cultural context, cultural responding refers to actions a person takes or adapts as a result of cultural noticing, and context-specific teacher preparation refers to teacher preparation that it is intentionally designed to focus PST attention on contextual factors in the classroom that should inform their teaching practice. These cultural noticing and cultural responding behaviors seem to be consistent both inside and outside of the classroom. PSTs who participated in RHU's University At School (UAS) program, a year-long, context-specific teacher preparation program, prior to the IST program seem to engage in more cultural noticing in Mexico and sometimes even engage in cultural responding based on the details they notice. UAS PSTs do seem to continue to deepen their capacity to engage in cultural noticing and cultural responding during the IST experience.

### **2.4.2.1 Context-specific teacher preparation may make a difference**

Marlena is one PST who participated in RHU's UAS program. Her cultural noticing ability appears to be evidenced by an explanation she gives of a conflict between her host mother, Fernanda, and another of the PSTs in her house, Lauren. Marlena explains,

[Lauren] was vegetarian so she was unable to eat meat. Our host mother would cook a dinner with...meat...and she found it very rude when [Lauren] would not eat dinner with

us. It ended in many arguments. From our host mother's point of view,...since...we are living in her house...we should eat what is provided and be thankful....[Lauren] thought that [Fernanda] should adjust her cooking options to fit her needs. (Marlena IDI post-test).

Marlena seems to be able to compare Lauren's perspective to Fernanda's and notices differences in cultural values that led to the conflict. She notices that Lauren more highly valued her individual right to follow her vegetarian diet and skip dinners where meat was served, which is not surprising as some U.S. Americans place a high value on individual rights. Marlena also appears to notice that Fernanda felt that Lauren was acting as a rude houseguest by turning down her hospitality. This also makes sense as showing hospitality to guests is an important cultural practice for many Mexicans. Marlena's cultural noticing ability may help her understand differences in cultural values and practices when she works with culturally diverse students in U.S. classrooms.

Marlena also appears to notice cultural differences in her classroom. Even on her very first day in her JIS classroom, she seems to be sensitive to the cultural context. Her new mentor teacher tells her that Mexicans touch a lot more than U.S. Americans, and not to be surprised if the students touch her a lot. Marlena responds, "I noticed that! So it's ok if they want to sit in your lap?" The teacher tells her that this behavior is normal and cultural (FN 02, 04.16.12). Marlena seems to already have the ability to engage in cultural noticing and cultural responding on her first day in Mexico, as she appears to quickly notice this cultural difference and seems to be ready to adapt her behavior in the classroom to accommodate it. These abilities may be related to her participation in the UAS program before coming to Mexico, as this context-specific teacher preparation program encourages PSTs to pay attention to contextual factors that

should shape their teaching practice. Marlena's cultural noticing and cultural responding abilities may help her in the future when she has her own U.S. classroom. They may help her to notice the cultural practices of culturally diverse U.S. students and adapt her teaching practice to accommodate these practices.

Michelle is another PST who was in the UAS program. In this excerpt, Michelle describes what she notices about cultural context in Mexico relating to her host mother and meal time behaviors, and how she responds to what she notices. She explains:

Whenever I...eat dinner [at home], I just put as much as I want on my plate....I was always taught not to waste food....Here, it's put on my plate and I'm expected to eat...until everything is gone....[My host mother] said, "It...makes me very sad when you don't eat everything that I make you...." [So I] eat as much of it as I can....[then when she leaves] the room....[I] throw it away (Michelle interview 2).

In this excerpt Michelle compares her host mother's cultural practices around meals to her own and seems to adapt her behavior to respond to the context. In the U.S., Michelle was taught not to waste surplus food but rather to conserve it for a later time. In Mexico, Michelle's host mother seems to believe that surplus food should be given to guests as a gesture of hospitality and refusal of this food is offensive. Even though Michelle's values appear to go against wasting food, she seems to adapt her behavior to respond to the cultural practice she observes. Again, it seems that the UAS emphasis on the importance of context may have influenced Michelle's behavior. Michelle's ability to notice details about cultural context and respond to them may help her when she teaches in a U.S. classroom and she encounters a family with cultural practices that are different from her own. She may be able to respond to these different cultural practices by adapting her teaching practice.

Cameron is a third UAS PST who seems to engage in cultural noticing and cultural responding, both inside and outside of his classroom. Gay (2010) suggests that the cultural practices of Latin American students around learning have historically involved more verbal participation than those of White students in the U.S., so discussing ideas with other students may be a useful classroom activity in classrooms with high populations of Latin American students. Cameron seems to notice this difference at JIS, and his teaching practice responds to what he notices. I observed that Cameron changed his voice frequently to hold the attention of his students in the following field notes passage: “Cameron uses his voice well to hold the attention of the class: he changes the volume and how fast he speaks to keep students engaged” (FN 20, 05.06.13). In the next field notes excerpt, I ask Cameron how he adapted his teaching practice based on cultural information he learns from his JIS students:

I asked him if he used [voice modulation] at his last placement. He says no, at...Primrose...he used a lot of "teacher hand up = quiet" and beats to get student attention. He noticed the first week at JIS that these strategies weren't working as the students were too chatty. So he uses voice modulation instead (FN 12, 04.26.13).

Cameron notices within his first few days at JIS that some of the teaching practices he used in the past to manage his class did not work for his more verbal Latin American students at JIS. As a result of what he notices, Cameron seems to modify his teaching practice to respond to this difference in cultural practices. Cameron continues to explain how he adapts his lessons for his more participatory JIS students: “I had to adapt my lessons to make it even more engaging, and still allow them at times to talk” (Cameron interview 2). As Cameron seems to arrive in Mexico already with some cultural noticing and cultural responding abilities, he appears to be able to quickly notice details about cultural context related to appropriate classroom behavior at JIS and

modify his teaching practice to respond to the needs of his students. It appears that the UAS emphasis on teaching as an activity that should respond to contextual information may have influenced Cameron, as he makes this adjustment early on in his IST experience. Cameron's cultural noticing and cultural responding abilities will probably continue to serve him well when working with culturally diverse U.S. students in the future.

Annie is a PST who was not part of the UAS program. Annie also has moments of learning inside the JIS classroom that lead her to adapt her teaching practices. But unlike the UAS PSTs, Annie's adaptations seem to be focused only on modifying her pedagogy to match her cooperating teacher's style. She does not modify her teaching practices to respond to details about cultural context gathered from her students. Although her cooperating teacher seems to have good ideas about teaching that are worthy of emulation, Annie's focus on using her cooperating teacher as a model for her own practice seems to blind her from noticing any details about cultural context on her own. Even when asked directly about the need for adaptations based on student cultural practices, Annie cannot offer any details about cultural context that she has noticed. She can only describe adaptations she could make based on the pedagogical practices of her co-op teacher. When asked what differences she noticed between the students in her previous student teaching placement in the U.S. and her JIS students that led her to adapt her teaching, Annie persists in focusing on emulating her cooperating teacher's practices:

I...really liked the way that [Miss Olivia] ran the classroom....At home, with five- and six-year olds, it's not baby talk, but I wouldn't use the words that Miss Olivia does....she uses her normal conversation voice....Language was a huge thing for me to adjust to (Annie interview 2).

As Annie seems to still be in the early stages of developing cultural noticing ability, she does not say she notices any cultural differences even when directly asked about them. Although she discusses languages differences, she still sees these only as pedagogical differences between how U.S. teachers talk with young children and the way her cooperating teacher, Miss Olivia, talks with her class at JIS. She does not see these language differences as possible differences in cultural practices between JIS and U.S. teachers and students. Although Annie's teaching practices may improve by using her cooperating teacher as a model, her teaching does not respond to any details she notices about her students' values or cultural practices.

Lisa is another PST who was not part of the UAS program. When Lisa discusses adaptations she made in her JIS classroom, she limits her observations to the fact that most of the JIS students bring technology (phones, tablets and computers) to class. When directly asked if she made adaptations to her teaching practice to respond to the needs of students who did not grow up in the U.S., Lisa responds, "Not as much, because most of my adaptations have always been Special Ed adaptations....I couldn't even give you an answer because I wasn't even paying attention to the cultural aspect of it" (Lisa interview 2). Like Annie, it seems that as Lisa is still just beginning to develop the ability to engage in cultural noticing, as she does not seem to notice anything about the cultural context that should inform her teaching practices. As a result, Lisa's teaching practice does not respond to any information about her students' values or cultural practices.

Overall, prior participation in the RHU UAS program appears to make an important distinction between PSTs in the Mexico IST program. UAS PSTs seem to enter the program with an ability to engage in cultural noticing and sometimes cultural responding as well, both

inside and outside of the classroom. PSTs without this preparation notice less about the cultural context and do not appear to engage in cultural responding.

#### **2.4.2.2 PSTs with some intercultural competence may deepen capacities through an IST**

Even though UAS PSTs seem to arrive in Mexico with some ability to engage in cultural noticing and cultural responding from their participation in the UAS Primrose program, they still appear to deepen these capacities during the Mexico program. Cameron was a participant in the UAS Primrose program. When asked what he learned about cultural context during his time in Mexico, Cameron offers:

Trying to respect different cultures....I think a better understanding of the students and understanding...where they come from will help, and I really want to incorporate that into any classroom or any community that I go into (Cameron Interview 2).

Even though Cameron already seems to have some ability to engage in cultural noticing and cultural responding at the beginning of the IST program, he still says he learned more about intercultural competence in Mexico that will improve his future teaching practice in U.S. classrooms. In particular, what Cameron describes in this passage is that in Mexico he learned the importance of learning about and responding to students' values and cultural practices in his teaching. This continued development may help Cameron in his career teaching in culturally diverse U.S. classrooms. It seems that attending to his cultural responding capacity through the IST experience may continue to help Cameron in the future, as he deepens his capacity to notice details about cultural context related to his students' experiences and respond to this information by building upon it in his classroom.

Michelle is another PST who was part of the UAS Primrose program. Like Cameron, Michelle also seems to enter the Mexico program with some ability to engage in cultural noticing

and responding. In Mexico, Michelle also seems to continue to develop her cultural noticing and cultural responding capacities. In this passage, Michelle explains how she was challenged to respond to her students' cultural practices around communication in order to work with JIS students. She explains,

My first lesson...was kind of difficult to...explain....I am so used to just talking to American kids...using...terms that they understand. But...[JIS] children, since they've learned...more formal English, ...I had to...re-route my thinking, right on the spot, and figure out how I would say it. And they understood it....I'm glad I had that experience because it...clued me in with the way I have to...explain things (Michelle interview 1).

It seems that the UAS focus on seeing teaching as a process of reflective, thoughtful engagement between teacher and students<sup>16</sup> might have helped Michelle in this situation at JIS. As Michelle explains, she was able to think about what she was trying to communicate and adjust her approach to respond to student feedback. It also appears that the opportunity to teach at JIS gave Michelle the opportunity to deepen her cultural responding capacity, as she had practice in communicating with people from different cultures and had to reflect on how best to do it. Attending to this experience pushed her to think about how she needed to adapt her communication to respond to her students and help them learn. Michelle continues, "At JIS I feel like I really had to find different ways to relate to...their perspective, because they were different than mine....I just kind of had to adjust my thinking to think like they do (Michelle 3). It seems that the concept of teaching as reflective and thoughtful engagement Michelle may have learned through UAS, combined with the opportunity of working with JIS students and reflecting on it, may have led Michelle to develop more cultural responding ability in Mexico. This



increased ability to make her teaching practice to respond to the cultural context of her classroom may serve Michelle very well as a teacher in a culturally diverse U.S. classroom.

Overall, PSTs with context-specific preparation before the IST and those without it seem to learn different lessons during the IST program. Those with context-specific preparation, such as Cameron and Michelle, seem to deepen to existing cultural noticing and cultural responding capacities that non-UAS PSTs such as Lisa and Annie do not have. Furthermore, the UAS PSTs make connections between cultural noticing, cultural responding, and the idea of improving their practice as classroom teachers. These are connections that non-UAS PSTs like Lisa and Annie do not appear to see.

### **2.4.3 Finding Three: Even when the circumstances seem very favorable, some PSTs seem to miss opportunities for engaging in cultural noticing or cultural responding**

The third finding that emerged from the data is that even PSTs who seem likely to engage in cultural noticing and cultural responding during the IST program due to qualities such as the ability to speak Spanish or IDI pre-test scores associated with a high degree of intercultural competence do not always do so. Earlier in these findings, I shared Marlana's explanation of a conflict between her housemother, Fernanda, and another RHU PST, Lauren. Whereas Marlana notices contextual details related to both sides of Lauren's difficult interactions with Fernanda, it seems that Lauren herself does not. Lauren summarizes her conflicts with Fernanda by simply saying, "There were some cultural differences in my house that caused issues because we weren't told how to navigate. The communication on the family's side was lacking" (Lauren, IDI post-test). Lauren never seems to understand Fernanda's point of view in their conflict and does not provide any evidence that she even tries to find out why Fernanda feels the way she

does. Even though Lauren spoke Spanish well and could communicate clearly with Fernanda, she seems to miss noticing any details about the cultural context surrounding this interaction and takes no responsibility for the conflict at all. In doing so, Lauren misses the chance to develop capacities in cultural noticing and responding. Questions that Lauren could consider that could lead her to notice more about this cultural context include, “Why is Fernanda angry?” or “How could I better understand Fernanda’s view of this conflict?” She could also ask herself, “What role do my actions play in this conflict?”

Samuel also misses details about cultural context during his time in Mexico. Throughout the program, Samuel attempts to connect with working-class Mexicans he meets during the month such as his host family’s maid. In this excerpt, Samuel discusses his desire to call the family’s maid by her first name in an attempt to treat her as an equal. He shares: “I really like Senora, who is our maid. I believe her name is Dora. We kept trying to find out her name but everyone would just say, ‘Just call her Senora. Just call her Senora’ ” (Samuel, Interview 2). Samuel has good intentions with his desire to call the maid by her first name, as he sees it as a sign of friendship and an attempt to treat her as his equal. However, he doesn’t question why his host family insists that he doesn’t address her by her first name and misses that Mexicans address their elders as “Mrs.” or “Mr.” – Senora and Senor – as a sign of respect. The fact that Samuel misses these details about cultural context is surprising, as his IDI pre-test score indicates that at least according to this quantitative measure, he has a higher level of intercultural competence than any other student on the trip, scoring in the “Acceptance” range on the IDI pre-test. Scores in this range are supposed to indicate “a capability to understand, shift cultural perspective, and adapt behavior across cultural differences” (Samuel IDI pre-test, p6). But in this passage, Samuel neither demonstrates a perspective shift nor adapts his behavior to respond to Mexican

norms. If Samuel would question his host family's insistence that he address her as "Senora" and find out why they don't want him to use her first name, he might be able to learn from the experience and develop more capacities in cultural noticing and cultural responding.

Samuel seems to miss contextual information inside his classroom as well related to his students' cultural practices. The information that he misses should inform his teaching practice. Whereas some of the UAS PSTs discuss how they adapt their teaching at JIS to accommodate more frequent verbal participation in the JIS classroom than they have experienced in U.S. classrooms, Samuel instead insists that JIS students abide by the same class rules and management style that he used in the U.S. classroom where he completed his previous student teaching experience. I capture his insistence in this field notes excerpt:

Samuel was standing in front saying to students, "I am not gonna talk over you."

Students were still chatting, but it did die down. He then said he felt he needed to review his two rules, and asked students, "Do you remember what my two rules are?" Students offered, "No phones" and "No talking when you are talking." He corrected the second rule and said, "Not just when I am talking but when any of your classmates are talking...if

Carlos gives a brilliant answer, I expect you to be quiet and listen" (FN 20, 05.06.13).

Whereas UAS PST Cameron adapted his teaching practice to respond to the cultural practice of more frequent class participation by modulating the volume of his voice to get students' attention (FN 20, 05.06.13), Samuel holds steady and insists that JIS students adapt to his cultural practice of keeping the classroom relatively quiet. Samuel explains that he sees the more frequent talking of JIS students in class as a result of his mentor teacher's classroom management practices and not a cultural practice. He observes, "If you feel that the teacher is...your friend, and very funny, then you are going to be more talkative" (Interview 3). Instead of insisting that the JIS

students follow the same rules he used with his Riverton classroom previously, Samuel could develop more cultural noticing ability by questioning why his JIS students are more talkative and considering cultural practices that may explain their behavior.

Overall, even when it seems that PSTs should notice details about cultural context, sometimes they do not. These moments of missed learning could be captured if PSTs would more closely examine their interactions with culturally different others in Mexico. This increased examination could help more PSTs develop cultural noticing ability and help them adapt their behavior to respond to cultural contexts – that is, help them act with intercultural competence. It seems that the data related to this finding point to the idea that not all PSTs will independently notice details about cultural context during an IST experience.

## **2.5 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

The findings of this study suggest that PSTs say they learn about intercultural competence through an IST experience in multiple ways. First, cultural immersion outside one's home country does appear to help to develop the cultural noticing ability that I suggest is the foundation of intercultural competence. Second, participation in a context-specific teacher education program before the IST program seems to improve a PST's ability to engage in both cultural noticing and cultural responding while in Mexico. And finally, even when circumstances seem very favorable, some PSTs seem to miss opportunities for engaging in cultural noticing and cultural responding in Mexico and would benefit from increased programmatic support.

The first finding brings to light the idea that cultural immersion outside one's home

country may help to develop cultural noticing ability. Cultural immersion involves a participant's immersion in a cultural context outside of their own and involves affective, behavioral, and cognitive learning (Cushner, 2007). Cultural noticing is a person's ability to notice details about cultural context. Participants say that this development happens most frequently during an IST experience through cultural immersion activities outside of the student-teaching classroom. Activities such as exploring an open-air art market, attending a professional soccer game, visiting with a Zapotec indigenous family of artisans, and interacting with Mexican host families seem to help PSTs build the most cultural noticing ability by immersing them in situations with many contextual details different than their home environment. Attending to cultural noticing through participation in and reflecting on these activities helps participants to build cultural noticing ability.

The second finding suggests that participation in a context-specific teacher education program before the IST experience seems to improve a PST's ability to engage in both cultural noticing and cultural responding while in Mexico. Cultural responding refers to actions a person takes or adapts as a result of cultural noticing, and context-specific teacher education programs are intentionally designed to focus PST attention on contextual factors in the classroom that should inform their teaching practice. RHU's UAS program is a year-long, context-specific teacher education program. PSTs who were part of the UAS program before participating in the IST program seem to engage in more cultural noticing in Mexico and sometimes engage in cultural responding based on what they notice. This may be the case because the UAS PSTs spent a year before going to Mexico attending to their cultural noticing and cultural responding capacities through UAS program activities.

The third and final finding that emerged from this study is that even when circumstances

seem very favorable, some PSTs seem to miss opportunities for engaging in cultural noticing and cultural responding in Mexico. This appears to point to the need for guided reflection activities throughout the IST program. These activities are needed as the findings suggest that without them, some PSTs do not reflect on interactions with culturally different others independently. As a result, they seem to fail to notice important details about cultural context. Attending to these contextual details through guided reflection could help PSTs build cultural noticing capacities, and eventually cultural responding capacities as well.

These findings have implications for the theory, research, and practice of teacher preparation for culturally diverse classrooms.

### **2.5.1 Theory**

Through this research, I advance the idea of intercultural competence as being comprised of two capacities. Intercultural competence begins with cultural noticing as a foundational capacity, and cultural responding as a capacity that builds upon cultural noticing. This new conceptualization of intercultural competence is displayed in Figure 3 below.



**Figure 3.** Intercultural Competence

Development of cultural noticing capacity occurs through activities in which they attend to cultural noticing, and may occur through IST programs. Programmatic support that helps PSTs attend to cultural noticing may assist them in this development process. Cultural responding is an important next step after cultural noticing, as it involves action. Findings in this study suggest that a PST's capacity to engage in cultural responding does not emerge until after a foundation of cultural noticing is in place, as multiple PSTs in the IST program who failed to notice details about the cultural context of their classroom also failed to modify their teaching to respond to this context. Simply put, they cannot respond to what they cannot see. Cultural responding capacities develop in the same way that cultural noticing capacities do, by attending to the capacity. Programmatic support may help this development process as well. Cultural noticing and cultural responding capacities may help PSTs working with culturally diverse students in U.S. classrooms in the future, as it may enable them to notice more about the values and cultural practices of their students and propel them to modify their teaching practice to respond to what they notice.

### **2.5.2 Research**

The findings from present study support and add to the literature that cultural immersion experiences outside of one's home country may enable PSTs to develop some intercultural competence (Cruickshank & Westbrook, 2013; Faulconer, 2003; Lupi et al., 2012; Mahon & Cushner, 2007; Marx & Moss, 2011; Sahin, 2008; Santoro & Major, 2012; Sharma et al., 2013; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Willard-Holt, 2001; Zhao et al., 2009). The present study contributes to this literature by suggesting that a month-long cultural immersion experience is most useful to develop capacity in cultural noticing, the foundation of intercultural competence, but perhaps is only marginally useful in developing cultural responding capacities. Cultural responding capacities may only develop if the PST already has a foundational capacity to engage in cultural noticing developed from previous experiences. Many studies in the literature review suggest that IST experiences may influence the teaching practices of PSTs preparing to teach in culturally diverse U.S. classrooms in a number of ways such as improving their understanding of how second language learning impacts a child's classroom experience (DeVillar & Jiang, 2009; Faulconer, 2003; Jiang et al., 2010; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008), increasing their ability to vary teaching and communication strategies to support diverse populations (Hopkins-Gillespie, 2012; Malewski & Phillion, 2009; Miller & Gonzalez, 2010), and improving their ability to distinguish between cultural attributes and learning disabilities (Malewski & Phillion, 2009). However, the findings of the present study seem to show that an IST experience's influence on a PST's teaching practice may depend more on the participant's individual qualities such as prior preparation and less on the IST experience itself. PSTs in the who had no context-specific teacher education before participating in the Mexico IST program often missed information about the cultural context of their classroom that should have informed their teaching practice.



PSTs who had this context-specific training seemed to notice more and adapt their practice more frequently. More research should be conducted about how prior experiences inform a PST's development of intercultural competence through IST experiences.

The importance of this context-specific preparation in the findings of this study support the idea found in the literature that differences in individual participant qualities inform what participants say they learn through IST programs (Jiang et al., 2010; Johnson & Battalio, 2008; Karaman, 2010; Malewski & Phillion, 2009; Matthews & Lawley, 2011; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Zhao et al., 2009). Future research should continue to examine the relationship between a participant's individual qualities such as prior knowledge and experience, and what they say learn during an IST program. It seems clear that not all PSTs say they learn the same lessons, even when they are part of the same program.

Furthermore, more research needs to be conducted with culturally diverse PSTs. In this study, the one African American PST, Cameron, seemed to have well-developed capacities in cultural noticing and cultural responding. It is unclear whether these capacities were developed through Cameron's participation in RHU's UAS program, or if his life experience as an African American leads him to notice more about cultural context than White PSTs. This assertion supports the findings of Malewski and Phillion (2009), who suggest that a PST's perception of their IST experience may be shaped by their class, gender, and race.

### **2.5.3 Practice**

The findings of this study offer three implications that may shape the practice of teacher education. First, the findings highlight the role of programmatic support in developing intercultural competence capacities among PSTs. In particular, it sheds light on the value of

support that presents teaching as a context-specific endeavor as a means of developing these capacities. Second, the findings suggest that ISTs may be useful in developing some cultural noticing capacity among PSTs who have little understanding of cultural context at the beginning of the program. The third implication is that ISTs may be useful in helping to deepen the capacities of PSTs who begin the program already with some intercultural competence.

The first implication for practice is that programmatic support during IST programs seems to make an important difference by leading participants to focus and reflect upon cultural context. Attending to cultural noticing through facilitator-directed reflection activities may help to build cultural noticing capacity among PSTs. These activities should occur before, during, and after an IST experience in order to focus PST attention on details in the IST cultural context. These activities may include responding to journal prompts and receiving facilitator feedback on responses throughout the IST experience, discussing interactions in a face-to-face facilitator-led group setting, or even through a facilitator-moderated on-line forum during the IST experience. This finding supports a number of recent studies that emphasize the need for programmatic support to help PSTs develop intercultural competence through IST programs (Johnson & Battalio, 2008; Karaman & Tochen, 2010; Marx & Moss, 2011; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Willard-Holt, 2001). As the findings suggest, not all PSTs will independently engage in a closer examination of their interactions with others during an IST experience. This finding supports studies in the literature that contend that PSTs without programmatic support and guided reflection during an IST program may miss opportunities for intercultural development (Santoro & Major, 2012), as many will not reflect independently, fail to make sense of negative experiences, and miss cultural nuances (Mahon & Cushner, 2007). It appears that without

programmatic support for the IST experience, some missed opportunities for intercultural competence development may remain just that – missed opportunities.

Additionally, the findings also suggest that programmatic support that presents teaching as a context-specific endeavor may be particularly effective in increasing cultural noticing and cultural responding capacities among participants. RHU's UAS program is an example of a teacher preparation program that presents teaching in this manner. It seems that the UAS features of offering multiple courses on-site at the K-12 school with integrated field experiences, regular opportunities for group processing and reflection during the experience with an eye towards viewing teaching as a process of reflective, thoughtful engagement between teachers and students, and a deeper investigation overall of the school community may all be useful in developing cultural noticing and cultural responding capacities among PSTs. Adding more of these activities throughout an IST program may help PSTs notice more about the cultural practices and values of the IST student body, and even respond to what they notice.

The second implication for practice is that participation in an IST may help PSTs with little or no cultural noticing capacity begin to develop this foundation of intercultural competence. Development of this foundation seems to be most vital for White PSTs in the U.S, as most White PSTs have little preparation related to cultural context or experiences with cultural diversity (Castro, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Milner, 2010a; Sleeter, 2008). This IST experience may be particularly powerful for White PSTs, as for many, it is their first experience outside of the dominant culture and the first time they are immersed in an unfamiliar context (Marx & Moss, 2011; Zeichner & Melnick, 1996). The importance of intercultural competence development among White PSTs is underscored by data that suggests that 83% of all U.S. teachers are white (U. S. D. o. E. National Center for Education Statistics, 2012) and must cross

a cultural divide to communicate with many of their students. Cultural immersion outside of one's home country, such as IST experiences, may be a useful way for some White teachers to begin to understand the cultural divide they face in U.S. urban classrooms. However, the findings suggest that month-long IST experiences may not go far enough – although they seem to help PSTs some with no prior preparation develop some cultural noticing capacity, simply noticing differences in cultural context is not enough to enable them to help culturally diverse students. PSTs need to be able to respond to what they notice. Continued support is needed for these PSTs to help them to develop cultural responding capacity as well.

The final implication of this study for the practice of teacher education is that ISTs may help deepen the capacities of PSTs who begin the program with some foundational capacity already developed. PSTs who were part of a context-specific teacher preparation program before participating in the IST program and appeared to arrive with some of these capacities seemed to continue to develop their cultural noticing and cultural responding capacities while in Mexico. This idea supports studies in the literature that suggest that differences in individual participant qualities inform what participants say they learn through IST programs (Jiang et al., 2010; Johnson & Battalio, 2008; Karaman, 2010; Malewski & Phillion, 2009; Matthews & Lawley, 2011; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Zhao et al., 2009).

Overall, IST programs should be viewed as a good resource to develop and extend some intercultural competence capacities among PSTs. Although participants do not say that they develop all of the intercultural competence they need to work effectively in U.S. culturally diverse schools during a one month-long IST experience, some PSTs do say they learn some of what is needed. In this light, IST programs may be considered one path to supporting the development of intercultural competence among PSTs.

### **3.0 WHAT PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS REPORT AS LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES THAT ARE DIFFICULT TO TRANSFER FROM INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TEACHING TO U.S. CLASSROOMS**

Main research question: What do PSTs report as learning opportunities in international school classrooms that are difficult to transfer into the U.S. context?

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

##### **3.1.1 Cultural divides as a problem in teacher education**

Teacher education scholarship has suggested that teachers encounter and must bridge cultural divides in order to successfully support the academic and social success of all U.S. students (Delpit, 2012; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2015; Milner, 2010a). Culture can be understood as a dynamic system of values and practices a person uses to give order and meaning to their life and the lives of others (Gay, 2010). These values and practices are a result of participation in a particular community over time, and how a person engages with the values and practices of a particular culture may vary from one individual to another as the context for their participation changes (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). Given this understanding of culture, a cultural community can be subsequently understood as a group of people who share a culture (Rogoff, 2003).

Although community membership should not be defined by static descriptors such as a person's ethnicity, race or primary language, these demographic identifiers are relevant to understanding many cultural communities because they have had such long-standing influence on the values people hold and the practices in which they have opportunities to participate (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003).

Even teachers who share ethnic or racial heritage with their students may notice cultural differences between themselves and their students. This may be the case as people can participate in multiple cultural communities and engage in various cultural practices (Rogoff, 2003). Students may participate in a popular cultural community such as the hip hop cultural community and embrace values such as innovation and creativity (Ladson-Billings, 2015). Or students may associate themselves with emo culture, a popular culture that focuses on the importance of relationships, emotions, and introspection (Stiernberg, 2007).

Although cultural divides may exist between all teachers and their students (Milner, 2010a), they may be more significant when teachers are from a different racial or ethnic background than their students. Recent national data reports that this is the case in many U.S. urban<sup>17</sup> classrooms, as 83% of all U.S. teachers are White, and students in U.S. urban areas identify as 35% Hispanic, 30% white, 25% African American, and 10% representing other racial and ethnic groups and multi-race students (U. S. D. o. E. National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). For the purposes of this discussion, I when I refer to U.S. classrooms, I mean U.S. public school classrooms which reflect this urban demographic of approximately 70% culturally diverse students and 30% White students. By culturally diverse, I mean non-White students and students whose first language is not English<sup>18</sup>.

Scholarship about ethnic-matching also suggests that a teacher's ethnicity makes a difference in teaching and learning (Easton-Brooks, 2013). Ethnic-matching refers to the circumstance of having a teacher and student from the same ethnic group. Research suggests that ethnic-matching can make an impact on both the reading achievement scores (Easton-Brooks, Lewis, & Zhang, 2010) and math achievement scores (Eddy & Easton-Brooks, 2011) of African American students. This research suggests that a teacher's ethnicity does indeed play a role in his/her ability to support culturally diverse students, and that the cultural divides that exist between teachers and students who are not ethnically-matched are real and are worthy of study as a problem in teacher education.

In addition to the scholarship about ethnic-matching, a number of education studies about related topics suggest that the cultural divides that White teachers face to support culturally diverse students may be problematic. Studies related to three ideas support this assertion. First, recent national data reveals that disparities in achievement data persist between White students and most culturally diverse students (Kena et al., 2015). Second, teacher education scholarship suggests that many teachers have little understanding of those culturally or racially different than themselves (Castro, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Milner, 2010a; Sleeter, 2008). And third, most teachers leave urban classrooms within three years (Clarke & Holmes, 2006). Overall, it seems that many teachers have difficulty crossing the cultural divides that exist between themselves and culturally diverse students, and as such have difficulty supporting the academic success of these students. In an effort to learn how to help teachers cross these cultural divides, some scholars have looked to research about study abroad programs, as these programs help participants learn about a culture that is not their own.

### 3.1.2 International student teaching programs

Since at least the 1970s, some teacher education programs have offered pre-service teachers (PSTs) the opportunity to complete an international student teaching experience (IST) as part of their course of study (Sleeter, 2000). An IST is a type of study abroad program, where students have the opportunity to immerse themselves in a different country and community, and student teach in a particular school (Quezada, 2004). Scholarship suggests that study abroad programs may help students understand that people can view the world differently than they do, and study abroad programs may help students to develop the communication and interpersonal skills needed to work across cultures (Cushner & Brennan, 2007; Merryfield, 2000).

Although many studies suggest that IST programs in general may enable PSTs to bridge the cultural divides the encounter in U.S. classrooms (Cruickshank & Westbrook, 2013; Faulconer, 2003; Hopkins-Gillespie, 2012; Lupi et al., 2012; Mahon & Cushner, 2007; Marx & Moss, 2011; Sahin, 2008; Santoro & Major, 2012; Sharma et al., 2013; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Willard-Holt, 2001; Zhao et al., 2009), less is known about *what* PSTs learn specifically within the bounds of an IST classroom that can help them become successful teachers in U.S. classrooms.

Some proponents of IST programs suggest that experiences in IST classrooms may help PSTs learn to bridge the cultural divides the encounter in U.S. classrooms. These experiences may give PSTs opportunities to better understand a culture other than their own (Gilson & Martin, 2010; Kabilan, 2013; J. F. K. Lee, 2011), and may help them to learn how to adapt their instruction for a particular cultural context (Hopkins-Gillespie, 2012; Jiang & DeVillar, 2011; Yang, 2011; Zhao et al., 2009). However, urban and multicultural education scholarship suggests that teaching may be too context-specific of an endeavor for the lessons learned in an



international classroom to transfer to future practice in U.S. classrooms (Alfaro & Quesada, 2010; Cruickshank & Westbrook, 2013; Gay, 2014; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014). By context-specific, I mean that a teacher's decisions and actions should respond to the social context of their classroom, including the cultural practices, values, and behaviors of the students in their room as well as larger social forces rising from the community, state, and nation (Milner, 2010a). Given these conflicting views about how effective IST classroom experiences can be in preparing PSTs to succeed in U.S. classrooms, it is important to listen to what PSTs say they actually learn about teaching from their IST experiences and what obstacles they see to transferring<sup>19</sup> this learning to teaching in U.S. classrooms. Indeed, listening to what PSTs say about this learning has the potential to contribute to what we know about preparing teachers to support the academic and social success of culturally diverse students in U.S. classrooms.

### **3.1.3 Studying what PSTs say they learn in an IST program**

In this study, I focus on what PSTs say they learn about teaching during a month-long IST placement in Mexico City, Mexico and the challenges they see transferring what they learn into U.S. classrooms. I focus on this program because short-term study abroad opportunities such as the one under study are increasingly viable ways for PSTs to study abroad (Johnson & Battalio, 2008). Three major themes emerged from the study. First, PSTs report that they struggle to see how expectations shape teaching and learning environments. Second, PSTs say that they struggle with instructional shifts in constructing knowledge due to organizational and structural variations in different contexts. And third, PSTs report that they are unsure how to create deep caring relationships that can serve as vehicles for student academic success in the context of U.S. classrooms. Overall, listening to what PSTs say they actually learn about teaching during this

month-long program and challenges they articulate in transferring what they learn into U.S. classrooms is important because most teacher education programs prepare PSTs to work in multiple contexts (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014). Learning about the challenges these PSTs say they encounter in transferring what they learn between contexts may help researchers and teacher educators become more aware of disconnects that PSTs experience between contexts, and help them identify new pathways teachers can use to bridge cultural divides they encounter in U.S. classrooms. In this way, this study may help researchers, teacher educators, and teachers get closer to the goal of supporting the academic and social success of all U.S. students.

### **3.2 A LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review for this study was a systematic and thematic review of relevant literature from 2003 to 2013 on the topic of what PSTs learn about teaching through IST programs. I selected this time period and type of review as I am interested in recent work that examines what PSTs say they learn about teaching in IST classrooms and how they say this learning transfers into a U.S. context. I searched the following four databases: Google Scholar, Web of Science, Springer Link, and JSTOR. In my search I used the following key words: “pre-service teacher education” and either “study abroad” or “international field experience.” Additionally I added the following set of key words to each search: “cross-cultural,” “intercultural,” “multicultural,” “diversity,” “cultural awareness,” and “cultural competence”. I used these keywords because they describe ideas related to teaching in culturally diverse U.S. classrooms. My database search yielded a total of forty-five empirical research studies and eighteen conceptual or descriptive articles. I later added 11 additional ancestral works to my set for a total of seventy-four relevant

documents. By ancestral works, I mean literature that did not surface in my systematic database search (primarily due to their publication date) but were cited by many articles I read as essential to understanding the problem under study. Most of these ancestral works were literature reviews and handbook chapters about international student teaching and preparing teachers to work with culturally diverse students in U.S. classrooms.

From this collection of seventy-four documents, I then narrowed my selection to include only empirical research articles where study participants were all exclusively PSTs participating in an IST program. Studies where participants were also participating in other study abroad activities such as coursework at a foreign university were excluded. I narrowed my literature review in this way because I only wanted to include programs that principally focused on providing an international classroom teaching experience for PSTs. Twenty-eight research articles emerged from this systematic selection.

Three themes emerged from my systematic review of literature about IST programs. First, PSTs learn about culturally different others through IST programs. By culturally different others I mean people with cultural backgrounds different than the PSTs in this study. Second, PSTs learn about themselves through IST programs. And third, PSTs learn about the practice of teaching through IST programs. These three themes are consistent with what previous research describes as the three general areas of learning for participants in IST programs (DeVillar & Jiang, 2009; Quezada, 2004). Findings related to these first two themes, learning about culturally different others and learning about themselves, will first be briefly summarized. They will not be discussed in depth as they relate more to what PSTs learn from their overall IST experience and not specifically from their experience in an IST classroom. By overall IST experience I mean all aspects of their IST program including teaching in an IST classroom, time

spent with their host family and host community, and participation in planned excursions as part of their overall immersion in a different culture. The present study relates specifically to what PSTs learn in an IST classroom, so literature related to this particular facet of the IST experience will be discussed in the most depth.

### **3.2.1 Learning about culturally different others**

All twenty-eight studies included in this literature review offer findings related to the theme that PSTs discover or deepen their awareness through IST programs that people who are culturally different from themselves may have values and cultural practices—different than their own. Eleven of these studies were qualitative studies that analyzed sources such as individual and group interview transcripts, course assignments, field notes, and student journal reflections (Brindley et al., 2009; Cruickshank & Westbrook, 2013; Faulconer, 2003; Henry, 2007; Hopkins-Gillespie, 2012; Lupi et al., 2012; Malewski & Phillion, 2009; Sharma et al., 2011; Sharma et al., 2013; Yang, 2011; Zhao et al., 2009). The number of participants in these studies ranged from three to forty-nine PSTs. Twelve of these twenty-eight studies analyzed similar qualitative sources and also analyzed surveys completed by PSTs (DeVillar & Jiang, 2009; Jiang et al., 2010; Jiang & DeVillar, 2011; Johnson & Battalio, 2008; Kabilan, 2013; J. F. K. Lee, 2009, 2011; Mahon & Cushner, 2007; Marx & Moss, 2011; Miller & Gonzalez, 2010; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Sahin, 2008; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007; Willard-Holt, 2001). The number of participants in these studies ranged from eleven to eighty-seven participants. Two of the twenty-eight studies (Karaman, 2010; Karaman & Tochen, 2010) used a discourse analysis method to study the experiences of one PST each in significant depth. Finally, one of the twenty-eight studies (Schlein, 2010) used a self-study methodology in which the researcher

examined her own experience as a PST in an IST program through analyzing stories she wrote about her own IST experience and field notes that described her dialogues with fellow PSTs in the same IST program.

The literature related to what PSTs learn about culturally different others through IST programs highlights four key ideas. First, PST peers and host families shape what PSTs learn about the values and culturally practices of others (Karaman & Tochen, 2010). Second, supporting PSTs in a reflection process throughout the IST experience seems to be instrumental in helping them learn about the values and cultural practices of culturally different others (Marx & Moss, 2011; Sharma et al., 2011; Sharma et al., 2013). Third, what PSTs learn about the cultural practices and values of others is shaped by their own identity around race, gender, cultural background and class (Sharma et al., 2011). And finally, program duration seems to impact what a PST learns about the values and cultural practices of culturally different others (Johnson & Battalio, 2008). As these four ideas relate more to a PST's overall experience in an IST program and not specifically their experience in an IST classroom, they will not be discussed in further detail in this study.

### **3.2.2 Learning about themselves**

Eight of the twenty-eight studies have findings that relate to the theme of PSTs learning about themselves through IST experiences (Faulconer, 2003; Jiang et al., 2010; Jiang & DeVillar, 2011; J. F. K. Lee, 2009; Lupi et al., 2012; Mahon & Cushner, 2007; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007). The methods used in all of these studies have been largely qualitative and have been described in the previous sub-section, "Learning about culturally different others." This literature supports the idea that the unfamiliar setting of an IST program

promotes personal growth and transformation in three important ways. First, it enables PSTs to develop or deepen qualities such as determination, maturity, and confidence as they encounter new challenges (Jiang et al., 2010; Jiang & DeVillar, 2011; J. F. K. Lee, 2009; Lupi et al., 2012; Mahon & Cushner, 2007; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007). Second, it allows PSTs to become more self-aware as they face unknown environments (Faulconer, 2003; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007). And third, it helps PSTs become more adaptable when meeting unforeseen circumstances (Stachowski & Sparks, 2007). Although all of these findings are important as they relate to a PST's overall personal development, they are not discussed in more depth in this chapter as they relate to a PST's overall experience in an IST program and not specifically to their experience in an IST classroom.

### **3.2.3 Learning about the practice of teaching**

Twenty-three articles of the twenty-eight articles describe findings related to the theme that PSTs learn about the practice of teaching during an IST experience (Brindley et al., 2009; Cruickshank & Westbrook, 2013; DeVillar & Jiang, 2009; Faulconer, 2003; Henry, 2007; Hopkins-Gillespie, 2012; Jiang et al., 2010; Jiang & DeVillar, 2011; Kabilan, 2013; Karaman, 2010; Karaman & Tochen, 2010; J. F. K. Lee, 2009, 2011; Lupi et al., 2012; Mahon & Cushner, 2007; Miller & Gonzalez, 2010; Sahin, 2008; Sharma et al., 2011; Sharma et al., 2013; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007; Willard-Holt, 2001; Yang, 2011; Zhao et al., 2009) Methods used for each of these studies are largely qualitative with some use of surveys. Methods for these studies are described above in the literature review sub-section titled "Learning about culturally different others."

The studies in this review suggest three broad ideas related to what PSTs learn about teaching through IST programs. First, PSTs learn about how to instruct the content that they are

teaching. Second, PSTs learn about the context in which they are teaching, and how to modify their instruction to respond to this context. By context I mean the community, state, and national forces that shape classroom student learning experiences (Milner, 2010a). And third, PSTs learn about relationship-building strategies that support student academic success. As learning about context and learning about relationship-building relate most closely to the conceptual framework of the present study, literature related to these two themes will be described in the greatest depth. What PSTs learn about the content they teach will be briefly summarized first, then more detailed information will be given about the studies related to learning about context and relationship-building.

#### **3.2.3.1 Learning about content**

Six studies offer findings that suggest that PSTs in IST programs learn about content and how best to teach the content to a variety of students (DeVillar & Jiang, 2009; Kabilan, 2013; J. F. K. Lee, 2011; Mahon & Cushner, 2007; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007; Zhao et al., 2009). Methods for most of these studies are qualitative, utilizing data sources such as interviews and student journals. Some use surveys as well. Methods for each study are more fully described in the Literature Review sub-section, “Learning about culturally different others.” Important ideas from these study findings include the assertion that IST experiences allow PSTs to develop a greater mastery of the content they are teaching and methods to teach it (DeVillar & Jiang, 2009; J. F. K. Lee, 2011), and that IST experiences improve a PST’s ability to work with second language learners (Kabilan, 2013; J. F. K. Lee, 2011; Mahon & Cushner, 2007; Zhao et al., 2009). Now that studies that describe what PSTs learn about content have been addressed, my discussion shifts to what PSTs learn about context during IST programs.

### **3.2.3.2 Learning about context**

Sixteen studies suggest that PSTs in IST programs learn about the context in which they are teaching and how to modify their instruction to respond to this context (Brindley et al., 2009; Cruickshank & Westbrook, 2013; DeVillar & Jiang, 2009; Faulconer, 2003; Hopkins-Gillespie, 2012; Jiang et al., 2010; Jiang & DeVillar, 2011; Karaman & Tochen, 2010; J. F. K. Lee, 2009; Lupi et al., 2012; Mahon & Cushner, 2007; Sharma et al., 2011; Sharma et al., 2013; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007; Yang, 2011; Zhao et al., 2009). The literature suggests that PSTs learn about recognizing and adapting to the learning strengths and styles of culturally different students (Hopkins-Gillespie, 2012; Mahon & Cushner, 2007), they learn how to build upon student cultural knowledge in classroom activities (Sharma et al., 2013), and they learn about host country classroom management practices not used in the U.S. (Stachowski & Sparks, 2007; Yang, 2011). Although this literature is useful to introduce ideas about what PSTs learn about context, only two of these sixteen studies discuss why IST classrooms in particular may help PSTs learn about how context shapes teaching (Brindley et al., 2009; Cruickshank & Westbrook, 2013), and only three studies (DeVillar & Jiang, 2009; Jiang et al., 2010; Jiang & DeVillar, 2011) make connections between what PSTs learn about context in an IST classroom and how can help them understand the role context plays in shaping the learning experience in their future U.S. classroom.

Brindley et al. (2009) and Cruickshank and Westbrook (2013) both offer findings that may help to explain why IST classroom experiences might help PSTs to learn about how context shapes student learning. Brindley et al. (2009) studied the experiences of seventeen elementary and early childhood PSTs participating in a month-long IST program in England. Their data sources included student journals, field notes of classroom observations of the PSTs, and teacher



evaluation documents. Their findings suggest that teaching in an IST classroom pushes PST to make comparisons and contrasts between their IST school placement and schools in their home country, leading to an increased and more critical understanding of the role of context. The findings of Cruickshank and Westbrook (2013) adds more complexity to this idea. Cruickshank and Westbrook conducted interviews with twenty-four PSTs who completed a three-week IST experience in Beijing, China. Eight of the PSTs were Canadian, and sixteen were Australian. Their findings suggest that PSTs in any school placement are confronted with information about the school's context. In their home countries, PSTs who are part of the dominant culture may not notice contextual factors that shape student learning because being dominant culture members privileges them to ignore these factors if they choose. In IST placements, no PSTs are part of the dominant culture. As they lose their dominant culture privileges, they are forced to notice contextual information that shape classroom learning. Although both Brindley et al. (2009) and Cruickshank and Westbrook (2013) provide some insight into why IST classroom experiences may help PSTs learn about how context shapes teaching, neither study extends their findings into how PSTs transfer what they learn once they return to their home countries. Taking this longer view would have strengthened both studies.

Three studies (DeVillar & Jiang, 2009; Jiang et al., 2010; Jiang & DeVillar, 2011) offer findings that discuss how PSTs may transfer what they learn about context to U.S. public school classrooms. Jiang et al. (2010) studied the experiences of two groups of PSTs who completed a semester-long IST program in Belize in two separate years, 2005 and 2008. They had eleven participants total in their study who were all white female U.S. Americans. They examined participant journals, co-op teacher assessments, end of program questionnaires, and site visit notes. They noted that their 2005 cohort participated in much more reflection during the IST

experience related to the transfer of what they were learning to U.S. classrooms. In particular, they discussed how various elements of the local context shaped classroom learning. In data analysis, the researchers found that the PSTs in the 2005 cohort offered many more details and concrete ideas than the 2008 cohort about how they will transfer what they learned about context to their work in future U.S. classrooms. This research suggests that reflective activities that focus on how to transfer learning to a U.S. context increases the likelihood that PSTs will actually transfer what they learn from an IST classroom to a U.S. classroom. However, the only data collected from PSTs after the program ended was a six-item open-ended questionnaire completed as the program ended. Conducting interviews with PSTs once they returned to the U.S. or additional follow-up after an even longer time period would strengthen the results of this study.

DeVillar and Jiang (2009) and Jiang and DeVillar (2011) studied the semester-long experiences of thirteen PSTs in three IST placement sites, Belize, Mexico and China. These two studies appear to share the same data set, and their findings are very similar. For the purposes of this literature review, the findings of DeVillar and Jiang (2009) will be emphasized as they more closely align with the present research question. The placements these researchers studied occurred over a three-year period. Twelve of their white U.S. American participants were females, and one was male. They analyzed PST journals, pre- and post- program self assessment questionnaires, and field notes of site visits. Their findings suggest that the particular setting of the IST placement does influence what PSTs learn about teaching and context. The PSTs in the Belize placement experienced multiple cultures in the same classroom and students who came from a low-income community. Many PSTs in this group reported at the end of their IST experience that they felt confident they could work well in any U.S. setting, and with any socio-

economic group after this experience. PSTs in the Mexican and Chinese placements worked in private schools with limited exposure to poverty. PSTs in these groups did not make as specific connections between socio-economics and classroom learning when they discussed their IST classroom experiences, and did not make the same specific connections to working in U.S. low-income communities that the Belize participants did. The findings from both DeVillar and Jiang (2009) and Jiang and DeVillar (2011) suggest that learning about teaching in a context similar to those of U.S. urban public schools may help PSTs transfer what they learn about how context shapes teaching to a U.S. urban public school context. However, the only post-program data utilized in either study was a six-item open-ended questionnaire. More extensive, extended, and descriptive data gathered from participants after their return to the U.S. such as post-trip interviews or a six-month follow up questionnaire would have strengthened the results of both studies. Now that the subject of learning about context has been discussed, my discussion shifts to the last topic, learning about relationship-building.

### **3.2.3.3 Learning about relationship-building**

In addition to learning about content and context during IST experiences, PSTs learn about relationship-building in IST classrooms. Twelve studies offer findings related to this idea (Faulconer, 2003; Henry, 2007; Hopkins-Gillespie, 2012; Kabilan, 2013; Karaman, 2010; J. F. K. Lee, 2009; Miller & Gonzalez, 2010; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Sahin, 2008; Willard-Holt, 2001; Zhao et al., 2009). Some of these studies report that PSTs learn broad relationship building ideas such as learning to see students as members of families and cultural groups (Pence & Macgillivray, 2008) and getting to know students well enough that cultural barriers seemed to dissolve (J. F. K. Lee, 2009). Other studies describe specific communication skills PSTs learned in IST classrooms (Henry, 2007; Kabilan, 2013; Karaman, 2010; Sahin, 2008; Zhao et al., 2009).

Communication skills are an important part of building relationships with students, and many strategies suggested by Milner (2010a) to improve teacher-student relationships are based on increased communication. Attending to intercultural and non-verbal communication may play a particularly important role in helping teachers support the academic success of all students (Gay, 2010). Most of these studies simply describe what PSTs learn in IST classrooms related to relationship-building. However three studies (Faulconer, 2003; Miller & Gonzalez, 2010; Willard-Holt, 2001) make deeper links between what a PST learns about relationship building in IST classrooms and how they transfer this learning to U.S. classrooms. As these three studies address these deeper links, they will now be discussed in greater depth.

Faulconer (2003) followed the experiences of three PSTs in a three-week long IST program in Talapa, Mexico and collected additional data eight months later as the PSTs began their first jobs as new teachers in U.S. classrooms. Methods used in this study include interviews, observation field notes, analysis of documents, and analysis of student journals. The interviews were conducted at the end of the program, six weeks later, and again eight months later. During and six weeks after the IST experience, PSTs reported that the trip helped them to learn the importance of building a community that is inclusive of all children. Eight months after the program, follow-up interviews revealed that these PSTs had taken concrete steps towards building inclusive communities in their U.S. classrooms. Steps taken by PSTs included promoting the use of Spanish in the classroom as a means to validate the primary language of Spanish-speaking students, asking students to bring in artifacts from home to validate student cultural backgrounds, and encouraging students to share cultural stories from their families as a means of validating their cultural backgrounds. The participants reported that they saw these steps as necessary because of what they learned during their IST program. Although these

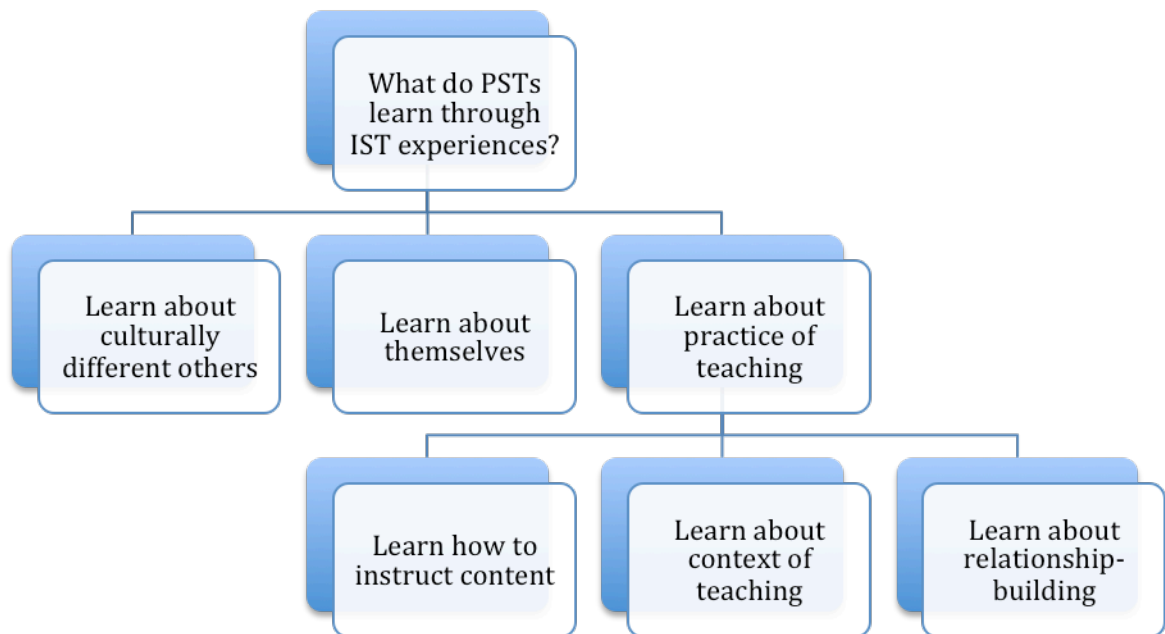
findings are useful particularly because they include follow-up with participants eight months after their IST program, this study would be stronger overall if data collection would have involved more information on the participants' beliefs as they entered the program, perhaps through a pre-trip interview. Additionally, this study could be strengthened if findings were based on the experiences of more than three participants.

Willard-Holt (2001) studied the perceptions of twenty-two elementary PSTs during a week-long IST program in Mexico. Data sources included questionnaires and interviews. Findings from questionnaires completed one year after the experience report that PSTs believed they had more patience and empathy for second language learners in their classroom as a result of the IST program, and that they used multiple strategies to communicate with second language learners who struggled to understand instruction. Although the long-term follow up that is part of the data collection positions this study as stronger than many others in this literature review, the IST program the PSTs attended was only one week in duration. This weakens the credibility of the study's findings. Replicating this study using an IST program with a longer duration would make it more compelling.

Finally, Miller and Gonzalez (2010) compared the pre- and post- surveys and course reflections from eighty-seven PSTs divided between placements in Orange County, California and Shanghai, China. The placements were organized and supervised by the same college professor. Findings indicate that PSTs in the Chinese field placement reported using more diverse communication strategies to communicate with the second language learner students than PSTs communicating with second language learners in the California placement. This research suggests that an international context may reinforce the need to use multimodal communication strategies to communicate with struggling students, and that this may increase the likelihood that

PSTs will use multimodal communication with students in the future. These findings are limited by the fact that PSTs in each placement were only involved in literacy activities with students – not the full range of activities typically performed by student teachers such as teaching math, science, or managing the class throughout the day. Also, like a number of other studies in this literature review, this study does not offer any data collected past the last day of the program. Adding data as such would strengthen the study overall. In particular, adding data that would allow for more open-ended data generation such as interviewing would most likely add more breadth to this study’s findings.

Overall, the studies in this literature review highlight what an IST experience helps PSTs learn about teaching, and a few studies make connections between what a PST learns in an IST classroom and how they transfer this learning to a U.S. classroom. Key ideas related to learning about context in teaching include that offering IST placements in contexts similar to the cultural and socio-economic context of U.S. public schools may help PSTs transfer what they learn about context, and that on-going reflection during the IST that focuses on transferring their learning to U.S. classrooms may also promote the transfer of what was learned. Important ideas related to learning about relationship-building in teaching include that teaching in an IST classroom may push PSTs to use more varied communication strategies when working with culturally diverse students and second language learners in U.S. classrooms, and that IST experiences may motivate PSTs to put ideas about inclusive classroom communities into practice once they return to work in U.S. classrooms. Figure 4 below summarizes all of the themes and sub-themes that emerged from this literature review.



**Figure 4:** Literature review themes and sub-themes

With a discussion of the literature established, my discussion turns now to the conceptual framework used to make sense of the findings in the study.

### **3.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

I draw from two conceptual frameworks to analyze data in the present study: the diversity and opportunity gap framework (Milner, 2010a) and the culturally relevant teaching framework (Ladson-Billings, 2009). These two frameworks both focus on the relationship between culture and teaching, and emphasize the role that relationships play as a vehicle for student academic and social success. The main difference that distinguishes these frameworks is that the diversity and opportunity gap framework looks at a variety of factors from both inside and outside the school that shape student learning experiences, and the culturally relevant teaching framework

looks more specifically at what the teacher does that influences student learning. Together, these frameworks help me to conceptualize what I term “culturally grounded instruction.” Culturally grounded instruction refers to a set of three guiding ideas that help teachers support the academic success of all students. I use these three ideas to make sense of the data generated in this study. The first idea is that deep caring relationships between teachers and students should serve as a vehicle for student learning (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, 2010a). By deep caring relationships I mean relationships where teachers care for students as people and not just as learners. Second, teachers should understand how teacher and school expectations of students shape teaching practices and student learning (Milner, 2010b). By expectations I mean what schools and teachers believe students are capable of achieving. And third, teachers should understand how facets of a school’s context shapes the learning opportunities afforded to students (Milner, 2010a). By context, I mean the community, state, and national forces that shape a learner’s experience in a particular place (Milner, 2010a).

The diversity and opportunity gaps conceptual framework and the culturally relevant teaching framework shape my conceptualization of culturally grounded instruction in different ways. The diversity and opportunity gaps conceptual framework focuses on the educational opportunities students have rather than educational outcomes, and focuses on the social systems that shape student learning experiences instead of blaming culturally diverse students for their poor performance on standardized achievement tests (Milner, 2010a). This framework shapes all three guiding ideas that are part of culturally grounded instruction. It shapes my ideas about expectations, as it describes how school and teacher expectations shape classroom learning. It shapes my ideas about the role of context, as it explains how contextual forces impact student learning opportunities. And it shapes my ideas about relationships, as it suggests that a teacher’s



efforts to build strong relationships with students are the best way to help students achieve academic success. And although I am using the diversity and opportunity gaps framework and the culturally relevant teaching framework to study pre-service teacher education, it should be noted that both of these frameworks were conceptualized in K-12 schools by studying in-service teachers.

The culturally relevant teaching framework offers a theoretical model for effective teaching that enables all students to achieve academically, affirm their cultural identity, and develop critical perspectives about social inequities that impact their lives (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Although first conceptualized based on a study that explored effective teaching of African American students, the tenets of culturally relevant teaching can be applied to all students to help them excel both in the classroom and in society (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). This framework most directly contributes to my ideas about the power of strong teacher-student relationships. Additionally, Ladson-Billings (2009) suggests a variety of classroom practices associated with helping students meet the tenets of culturally relevant teaching. Many of these practices relate to communicating high expectations to students and helping students understand the context in which they live as a means of developing their socio-political consciousness. In this way, the culturally relevant teaching framework also shapes my ideas about expectations and context.

### **3.3.1 Diversity and opportunity gaps framework**

The diversity and opportunity gap conceptual framework is comprised of five tenets: the rejection of color blindness, the ability to transcend cultural conflicts, the ability to understand how meritocracy operates, the ability to shift low expectations and deficit mind-sets and

practices, and the rejection of context-neutral mind-sets and practices (Milner, 2010a). These five tenets are concepts that help all teachers understand how diversity impacts education (Milner, 2010b). As the “heart” of effective teaching lies in a teacher’s ability to build sustainable relationships with students in any social context (Milner, 2010a), an understanding of these principles can help teachers become more successful and effective in their practice.

### **3.3.1.1 Color blindness**

The first tenet of the diversity opportunity gap conceptual framework is rejection of color blindness. Many teachers claim that they are “color blind,” and as such believe that they should treat all children the same regardless of their racial or ethnic background (Milner, 2010b). In doing so, these teachers are actually devaluing a key part of a culturally diverse child’s identity. By rejecting color blindness, teachers acknowledge that a student’s cultural and ethnic identity is an important part of who they are and the experiences that shape them. Furthermore, teachers who reject color blindness actively draw on the experiences and knowledge of culturally diverse students and scaffold classroom learning upon student experiences. For example, a social studies teacher who rejects color blindness may develop lessons and curricula that intentionally depict culturally diverse community leaders in civics lessons. A social studies teacher who is color-blind may only give examples of White community leaders in the same lesson, believing that his culturally diverse students will still understand the civics content being taught, and no additional effort needs to be made to help students see people from their cultural backgrounds as role models through the lesson.

### **3.3.1.2 Working through cultural conflicts**

The second tenet of the diversity opportunity gap conceptual framework is the ability to work through and transcend cultural conflicts. Milner (2010b) suggests that student learning opportunities may be limited by cultural incongruities between White teachers and culturally diverse students. Milner (2010a) explains that these cultural incongruities can adversely impact student learning opportunities because a “culture of power” exists in all classrooms (Delpit, 2006). These power dynamics are enacted in five different ways. First, issues of power are enacted in classrooms through dynamics such as that between teachers and students, in decisions such as which information textbooks present, and in the overall school culture regarding what “normal” student behavior is. Second, rules exist about how to participate in this power dynamic and involve ways of talking, writing, dressing, and interacting. Third, the rules of the culture of power mirror the rules of the culture that has the most power in society. In the U.S., Whites comprise the dominant culture group so being successful in school means following the values and cultural practices that Whites observe. As 83% of all U.S. teachers are White but only 30% of public school students in urban areas are White, the majority of students in urban areas must learn how to be successful according to the rules of a culture that is not their own (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012a, 2012b). Fourth, the culture of power framework explains that if you are not a member of the dominant cultural group, explicitly being told the rules of that culture helps a cultural outsider succeed. And finally, those with the power, in this case Whites, are usually the least willing to acknowledge that power and rules exist at all. Those with the least power are most likely to acknowledge it. Teachers must understand these cultural conflicts in order to overcome them and empower students (Milner, 2010a).

Teachers who work to transcend cultural conflicts in the classroom do so in two main ways (Delpit, 1992). First, they can modify the communication they personally use in the classroom to make it more relevant to students' lives. Teachers can use the ways of talking, writing, and interacting that their students utilize in order to make themselves understood by students. This may be quite challenging for some teachers, as communicating in ways used by culturally diverse students requires the teacher to become intimately familiar with the lives and communities of these students – something many White teachers are simply not willing to do (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Second, teachers can explain power dynamics to students, pointing out inequality in the social system. By doing so and then showing students how to move within the system with an understanding of these dynamics, teachers can help students move into positions with more social power. For example, a teacher that can use her students' ways of talking and interacting may be able to diffuse an argument between two students about something that occurred between them outside of school the night before, in a way that makes sense to the students and allows them both to feel respected. This teacher may also be able to point out to the students that both of them are actually frustrated about the same social problem and would be more powerful if they worked together. When teachers do not work to transcend cultural conflicts, these same students might simply be sent to the office for disrupting class, missing more instructional time and learning nothing from their disagreement.

### **3.3.1.3 Understanding how meritocracy operates**

A third tenet of the diversity and opportunity gap framework is an understanding of how meritocracy operates in society. Some White teachers do not understand how privilege operates in U.S. society, or the benefits Whites receive simply by being part of the dominant culture (Milner, 2010a). They are not aware that the color of their skin gives them privileges such as the

ability to go shopping without being followed, to speak out without having to be considered a credit to their race<sup>20</sup>, and to see images that look like them in curricular materials (McIntosh, 1990). Many White teachers come from working class backgrounds, and see their own ability to work hard and get a college degree as proof that upward mobility is possible for everyone in U.S. society (Sleeter, 2004b). Only by learning information about the structural barriers that exist for culturally diverse Americans can teachers begin to understand how different groups experience society in different ways and develop more accurate understandings of effort, ability, rewards, and success (Sleeter, 2004a). When they learn about these barriers, teachers can come to understand how meritocracy shapes U.S. society and approach their class differently. For example, a middle school math teacher who does not understand how meritocracy works may believe that students who perform poorly on the state achievement test in Algebra simply did not pay enough attention or study hard enough in his class to do well on the test. A math teacher with an understanding of how meritocracy shapes U.S. society may wonder how many of his students who scored well on the test had access to after-school private tutoring instead of needing to care for younger siblings, and may wonder about the quality of the mathematics teachers and math resources his students had before they came into his room for Algebra lessons.

#### **3.3.1.4 Low expectations and deficit mind-sets**

Teachers who view the knowledge and experiences culturally diverse students bring to the classroom as impediments to their success may find it difficult to set high classroom expectations (Milner, 2010a). By focusing only on what culturally diverse students may be lacking as evidenced by standardized achievement scores, teachers may set the bar for students very low and omit from their lessons the skills students need to critique and respond to problems and events in society (Milner, 2010b). Teachers and entire school communities may even fall into

using a “pedagogy of poverty,” keeping expectations for students so low that they are prepared only to follow orders and the directions of others later in life (Haberman, 2010). A third grade teacher with low expectations and a deficit mindset may focus a lot of time and energy on making sure students follow directions exactly, walk in straight lines, and work in silence. These emphases may even happen unintentionally. Nonetheless, these emphases indicate that the teacher believes that students will only be capable to listening to directions and following orders some day, as opposed to giving directions and orders to others. A third grade teacher without a deficit mindset may have much higher expectations for her students, focusing her energies much less on how well her students follow directions for rote learning tasks and much more on their abilities to creatively solve problems they identify, such as how to learn more complex reading skills when they only have a limited number of advanced reading texts in the classroom. Students will rise to the expectations teachers have for them (Milner, 2010a). If expectations are set low, students will rise to those. But if expectations are set high, students will respond and may soar. This tenet directly shapes how I conceptualize culturally grounded teaching, as I assert that teachers must understand how teacher and school expectations of students shape both teaching practices and student learning.

### **3.3.1.5 Context-neutral mind-sets**

The fifth tenet of the diversity and opportunity gap conceptual framework is that educators cannot have a “context-neutral” mindset – instead, they must take the social context of a particular place into consideration when understanding the education opportunities available for a group of students (Milner, 2010a). In other words, the opportunities and resources available for students in one setting may not be available for students in a different setting. By setting I mean a particular school, neighborhood, or community. Students in a suburban school in a

wealthy area may have significantly different opportunities and resources than students in poor rural or urban areas. These resources even include access to experienced teachers, since most teachers leave urban classroom within three years (Clarke & Holmes, 2006). As teacher education programs typically prepare pre-service teachers (PSTs) to work in a variety of settings, most programs rarely focus on a new teacher's learning on attending to the context in which K-12 teachers take place (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014). However, social groups have many different ways of interacting with academic content taught in classrooms. If teachers do not attend to the social context that shapes their students, they miss many opportunities to understand their students and the conceptions of the world around them held by their students (Heath, 1996). For example, a sixth grade teacher in a rural area who has a context-neutral mindset may not think it is important to talk about the local economy when discussing the topic of hydraulic fracturing (fracking) in science class, believing that the main points of content are the same regardless of where the school is located. However, a teacher who attends to the social context may teach this same lesson and encourage students to interview local community leaders about the impact fracking could have on their community in both positive and negative ways. This idea about having a context-neutral mindset shapes how I conceptualize culturally grounded instruction as well, as I suggest that teachers must understand how facets of a school's context shapes the learning opportunities afforded to students in order to be successful teaches. As all five tenets of the diversity and opportunity gap conceptual framework are now described, I shift now to describing the culturally relevant teaching framework.

### **3.3.2 Culturally relevant teaching framework**

The culturally relevant teaching framework is composed of three tenets: supporting student learning, developing cultural competence among students, and developing socio-political consciousness among students (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Although teachers may not go about promoting these tenets in their teaching practice in precisely the same way, successful culturally relevant teachers hold themselves and others in high regard, structure their classroom to promote community, and conceive of knowledge construction as an endeavor to be shared with students (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). All of these practices place a focus on building strong relationships with students that can help them master academic content, develop competence related to their own cultural background and knowledge, and learn to challenge the status quo of the community in which they live (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). In this way, this framework shapes how I conceptualize the role of deep caring relationships in culturally grounded instruction. Next, I describe the tenets of culturally relevant teaching in greater depth.

#### **3.3.2.1 Supporting student learning**

The first tenet of culturally relevant teaching is that it supports student learning. Culturally relevant teaching promotes teaching practices that allow all students to master essential academic skills such as literacy and numeracy (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Although some teachers may feel that high failure rates in their classes act as “sieve” that separates capable students from ones who are not, culturally relevant teachers create a “net” that supports all students in their classroom and allows them to succeed in mastering needed skills (Ladson-Billings, 2015). Culturally relevant teachers may engage in classroom practices such as allowing students to take a math test multiple times until they can demonstrate mastery of their multiplication tables, or



relentlessly work individually with students struggling with reading until they can read at grade level. This tenet is most directly related to my conceptualization of culturally grounded instruction as involving deeply caring relationships between teachers and students that can serve as a vehicle for student success.

### **3.3.2.2 Developing cultural competence**

The second tenant of culturally relevant teaching is that it allows students to develop cultural competence. Cultural competence is described as the ability of all students to be firmly grounded in their own culture, and fluent in at least one other culture (Ladson-Billings, 2015). The importance of this tenant arises from research that suggests that the academic success of African American students often comes at the expense of their cultural and social well-being (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). In an effort to support the development of the whole student and validate cultural knowledge not addressed in the official school curriculum, teachers can ask students, their families, and other community members to share their cultural knowledge in the classroom. Examples of ways to do this include asking a group of African American student leaders to teach the rest of the class the seven principles of Kwanzaa during a civics unit about communities and public values, inviting Mexican parents into class to share stories and myths traditionally shared with Mexican children for a literacy unit focusing on the short story genre, or asking Vietnamese parents familiar with farming techniques in Vietnam to explain how rice paddies and mountainside terrace farming work during a life science unit on how plants grow. This tenet relates to my conceptualization of culturally grounded instruction as involving an understanding of the importance of context. Teachers who are aware of local context are cognizant of the cultural backgrounds and community forces that shape their students' lives.

### **3.3.2.3 Developing socio-political competence**

The third tenant of culturally relevant teaching is that it supports the development of the ability to critique and question social inequities that impact students' lives (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). This tenant can also be described as the "so what" factor, as it helps students to see that although their lives are intricately connected to everyone else's through racial and cultural ties, education can help alleviate some of the problems people have with living in such a complex environment (Ladson-Billings, 2015). Teachers who develop socio-political competence in their students may engage in a map reading activity that helps students to discover that there are no grocery stores in their local neighborhood, link this to a health lesson on the importance of fresh food, and then lead into a writing lesson in which students write letters of concern to the local commerce board and real estate developers working in the area. This tenet also relates to my conceptualization of culturally grounded instruction as involving an understanding of the importance of context. Teachers who promote socio-political consciousness among their students demonstrate an understanding of the national, state, and local contextual forces that shape student lives. With the components of my conceptual framework established, the discussion now shifts to the methods I used to conduct this research study.

## **3.4 METHODS**

### **3.4.1 Researcher positionality**

Dangers can emerge for researchers "when they do not pay careful attention to their own and others' racialized and cultural systems of coming to know, knowing, and experiencing the

world” (Milner 2007, p388). As a means to guard against these dangers, I consider the personal experiences and epistemological positions that may influence my research. I am a White U.S. American female and I was a classroom teacher for fourteen years before turning to education research. As a White person, I have the privileges associated with being part of the dominant culture in U.S. society: the cultural practices I follow and the values I hold are shared with the majority of U.S. Americans and they are reflected in social institutions such as public schools and other civic organizations (Delpit, 2006). I am rarely questioned about my actions and intentions because most other Americans implicitly understand the cultural bases behind what I do (McIntosh, 1990). It is essential that I examine my racial experience as a White person because this experience shapes how I have “come to know,” how I “know,” and how I “experience” the world (Milner, 2007).

Although I am a member of the dominant cultural group in the U.S., I also have had some experiences with respect to culture and race in educational settings that give me a unique stance as a White American and a researcher. Two experiences stand out as shaping my research stance and agenda. First, I spent a year and a half working as a teacher at a home for orphaned children in rural Honduras directly after college. This was my first experience being outside of the dominant culture and I learned how to adapt my behavior to respond to this cultural context. Many of these adaptations related to the more defined gender roles I encountered as compared to the U.S. Mid-Atlantic region from which I came. This experience opened my eyes to the fact that differences in cultural practices and values exist and can significantly influence how people interact with one another (Rogoff, 2003). As a member of the dominant cultural group in the U.S., these differences had been largely invisible to me, even though I grew up with both White and African American neighbors (Sleeter, 2004a).

The second experience that shaped my stance and agenda as a researcher was my first U.S. teaching position. I worked at a public high school in Washington, DC where the majority of the staff and students were African American. Although working in Honduras helped me to understand that differences in cultural practices and values exist, working in DC opened my eyes to the fact that these differences didn't only exist between people from different countries, they also existed within my own country, within my own neighborhood, and indeed within the school building in which I taught. Until this point I had no idea that culturally diverse Americans may engage in cultural practices or hold values different than the ones I held as a White American. Thankfully, I had a wonderful mentor teacher who was an African American woman. By noting how she interacted with both staff and students, I learned about how adapt my behavior and interactions to respond to the African American environment in which I worked. For example, I learned to put much more emphasis on cultivating good relationships than I was used to doing in predominantly White environments. My experiences in Honduras and in DC have guided me to study and bring to light the idea that differences in cultural practices and values are real, they significantly impact what teachers do in classrooms, and they are largely invisible to many White Americans.

Of the twenty-two participants in this research project, there are seventeen White females, four White males, and one African American male. Most of the White participants probably share some of my experiences as a White American: one of relative privilege within our country as we are members of the dominant cultural group. These PSTs grew up in a society where their cultural practices and values were usually not questioned because they were shared by other White Americans and were reflected in U.S. social institutions such as schools and government organizations (McIntosh, 1990). For many of these participants, traveling to Mexico

represented the first time they were outside of the dominant culture. It may have been the first time their actions and values were not implicitly understood by most people with whom they interacted (Delpit, 2006). And although the one African American participant was already outside of the dominant cultural group in the U.S., this was also his first time outside of U.S. borders, and exposed him to different cultural practices and values than he was familiar with as well.

Being part of a dominant cultural group makes it dangerously easy for me to interact with others without critically thinking about my interactions as particular cultural practices and reflecting specific values (Sleeter, 2008). In my research, I have to be careful not to make presumptions about the sense others make of their experiences. This idea alone draws me to qualitative research, as this type of research seeks to understand the sense people make of their own experiences in the context in which they occur (Hatch, 2002). As many of the participants in this research study are White American females, I must be careful that my emic perspective as a White American female does not blind me to my participants' own unique experiences (Walcott, 2005). This emic perspective further compels me to closely follow qualitative methods for this research project. These methods bring to light the sense others make of their experiences, and steer me away from the dangerous presumption that all White American females share my views and ideas regarding culture and race. I actually think pursuing my research questions would be easier to do with more male participants or more culturally diverse participants, as viewing study data from a strictly etic perspective would likely lessen the likelihood that I would fall into the trap of blindly presuming that the participants share my viewpoints because we have the same cultural background or gender (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007).

### **3.4.2 Ethnographic methods studies**

The research question for this qualitative study asks, ““What do PSTs report as learning opportunities that are difficult to transfer into the U.S. context?” As this research question indicates, I seek to share the sense participants make of an IST experience in their own words, as people telling their stories is a window into their consciousness (Seidman, 2006). Remaining aware of my positionality as a researcher and rigorously following a well-designed qualitative study design are important pieces to my ability to do so. I have chosen to conduct an ethnographic methods study to answer this research question, because this type of study allows me to draw upon multiple data sources to help me construct the sense my participants make of their IST experience in their own words and in their own voices (Hatch, 2002). As an ethnographic methods study, data were generated through the process of fieldwork, and as the researcher, I was immersed in a social setting for an extended time (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007) and generated a range of data about participants, but principally interviews and participant observation data (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This study design is interpretive, as the research question asks how a specific context shapes participant meaning (Borko et al., 2008; Shulman, 1986). The study also has a naturalistic research design, as it generates data from participants in a natural setting, illuminates how they make sense of their experiences, and draws upon inductive data analysis to arrive at data themes (Hatch, 2002).

As a researcher employing ethnographic methods, I am indeed the main data collection instrument (Walcott, 2005) and it is important that I consider the assumptions I carry with me about the participants I study. As no individual is without values or beliefs, I can work against bias in my research by developing a strong sense of my personal identity and understanding how this identity influences my data collection and analysis (Graue & Walsh, 1998). This means in

addition to understanding my researcher positionality from the perspective of race and culture, I also consider how my personal identity and interactions with the participants influenced my data collection and analysis. By actively acknowledging my worldview and stance as a researcher in writing as I construct and write fieldnotes, I can negotiate my own perspective with that of my participants (Emerson et al., 1995).

I've also spent the past three years teaching and supervising PSTs at the graduate level, which made me feel more comfortable in Mexico with the college professors who led the trip than with the college student participants themselves. I actively worked to counter-act this tension by intentionally distancing myself from the trip leaders while with the PSTs, spending unstructured time with the PSTs in activities of their choosing, and generally making it known that I had no power or authority over them during our time in Mexico. But even in spite of these efforts, the participants may still see me as an authority figure and may not reveal to me what they truly think about their IST experience (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007). On the other hand, because of my experience as a teacher educator, many students seemed to be more open with me about struggles they had in the classroom because they sought my professional guidance. Although I never offered unsolicited feedback to PSTs about their teaching, I did offer guidance to a number of students when directly asked what I thought about their teaching after I observed them in their IST classroom.

### **3.4.3 Ethical considerations**

I attended to ethical considerations related to this study by talking to all participants ahead of time and reminding them of their free will in choosing to participate in this study (Walcott, 2005). Twenty-two participants out of a possible twenty-four consented to participate. As a

strong Spanish speaker, I attended to reciprocity in my research by offering to translate for all students (regardless of whether or not they participated in the study) whenever I could (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007). Quite a few students took advantage of this offer as I helped them barter for souvenirs in the market place, escorted two of them to the pharmacy when they were ill, and communicated with their host parents on their behalf when a misunderstanding occurred. I also translated for the two college professors on almost every excursion, which seemed to make my presence on the trip more of benefit for them and less of a burden.

### **3.4.4 Setting**

#### **3.4.4.1 University**

The IST program under study is offered by Rolling Hills University (RHU) College of Education. (All names for universities, schools, and individuals mentioned have been given pseudonyms.) The RHU website<sup>21</sup> offers a basic description of the university. RHU is a residential and public university located in a rural area about fifty miles away from a major U.S. city in the Mid-Atlantic region. RHU has approximately 8,500 students, and approximately 90% of these students are state residents. RHU was originally founded as a “normal school,” or teacher training school. It now offers over 150 majors and minor programs of study for bachelor degrees, thirty master degree programs, and two doctoral degree programs.

#### **3.4.4.2 Mexico City IST program**

The RHU Mexico City IST program was selected for study because it has been in existence for over twenty years, using the same international school for all student teaching placements and the same network of host families since the beginning of the program. This program stability led



me to believe that I would encounter fewer unexpected challenges than I would if I studied a more recently established IST program.

The RHU PSTs are prepared and supported in the Mexico City IST program by university staff. Program director Dr. Alan Jacobson explains why RHU offers the program and why PSTs choose to participate. He explains,

The Mexico program is powerful, life-changing. Students get exposure to differences: different cultures, and how different people live. It helps students learn about themselves. It helps them learn about developing nations, poverty, and social justice. Students go to learn about a different culture and themselves. They also go because it improves their resume, and it's fun (Pre-trip field notes, 08.17.12).

As Dr. Jacobson describes, RHU offers this program to PSTs to expose them to cultural differences and help them to grow as individuals. PSTs choose to go for these reasons, but also because potential employers like seeing international experiences on a PST's resume and because working and studying in Mexico for their last month of their undergraduate education seems to be like an enjoyable way to complete their degree. PSTs prepare for this experience by attending six monthly pre-departure meetings on the campus of RHU that focus on logistics, program expectations and requirements. They also work together in small groups to research and present introductory tourist-type information related to Mexican politics, culture, and history during the pre-trip meetings. The group travels together to Mexico City, Mexico for four and a half weeks with two RHU professors. Program director Dr. Alan Jacobson is a Professor of Early Childhood and Elementary Education at RHU and has been taking RHU PSTs to student teach at the Benito Juarez International School (JIS) in Mexico City, Mexico since 1993. He is assisted as by Dr. Maria Mancuso, a Professor of Special Education at RHU. This is her second

RHU Mexico City trip and she has also led groups of RHU PSTs on two-week field experiences in Europe.

While PSTs are in Mexico, they live in pairs or groups of four with Mexican families and work at JIS as student-teachers every day for four weeks. Most of the host families speak some English, have a connection to JIS, and have hosted RHU PSTs in this program for many years. They are paid a stipend by RHU for room, two meals a day, and laundry access. The Mexican families do not host PSTs over most weekends, as the group travels to Mexican cultural sites and stays in hotels.

#### **3.4.4.3 Benito Juarez International School**

The Benito Juarez International School (JIS) is a private international school located in Mexico City. The school's website<sup>22</sup> offers introductory information about the school. JIS was founded by international businessmen living in Mexico over 100 years ago. The school is a bilingual school in English and Spanish and offers an American-style educational program to over 2,600 students in grades K-12. The JIS student body is 58% Mexican, 28% percent U.S. American, and the remainder represents over forty other nationalities. Spanish is the most common first language of students. JIS students are regularly accepted into competitive universities in the United States, Mexico, and other countries. Approximately seventy-five percent of teachers and administrators are Mexican, twenty-two percent are U.S. American, and three percent are Canadian or English. A full ninety-five percent of the non-teaching staff at the school is Mexican, and the remaining five percent are U.S. American.

The JIS community is largely an affluent group of families who are connected both during and after their children's schooling experience. RHU program director Dr. Jacobson describes the school as one of the "wealthiest" in Mexico, and says that many JIS students have

parents who are leaders in Mexican and international business (FN 20120913). PST Renee says she thinks JIS families are attracted to the prestige of an international school (FN 13 0426-28). PST Lisa's host mother, Maricela, explained the JIS community to Lisa a bit differently. Maricela said that the JIS school community is a "closed social circle" where young people meet, marry, and then send their children back to JIS to meet other children whose families can afford the very high JIS tuition (FN 21 0507). Miss Yamila, one of the Early Childhood Center (ECC) teachers, also described membership in the JIS community as a lifelong involvement. On the first day the RHU PSTs were at JIS, Miss Yamila said that JIS alumni "tend to stay as part of the community" and that a number of JIS alumni like her were teachers at the school (FN 02 0416).

Two other factors shape the JIS experience for both teachers and students. First, JIS is an international Baccalaureate (IC) school. As an IC school, JIS uses the International Baccalaureate curriculum<sup>23</sup>, which emphasizes inquiry-based and project-based learning. This feature of the IC curriculum seems to promote the co-construction of knowledge by students along with JIS teachers. Second, JIS is a high expectations environment. By high expectations environment I mean that JIS teachers seem to believe their students are capable of high level thinking and academic success, and they communicate this belief to their students through words, actions, and the lessons they teach. As described in Milner (2010a), this high expectations environment may be related to the fact that many JIS students come from very wealthy families, and enjoy privileges that include society's beliefs that they are capable of great success.

Many of the broad propositions used by Ladson-Billings (2009) to describe the teaching practices of effective culturally relevant teachers also describe the teaching practices of many JIS teachers. These practices include having a positive conception of themselves, their work as

teachers, and the students they teach; promoting a shared construction of knowledge in the classroom; and enacting social relationships within the classroom that demonstrate caring and connectedness with all learners (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). As Ladson-Billings (1995a) acknowledges, these are not only culturally relevant teaching practices, they are also simply “good teaching” practices which seem to be aligned with the JIS culture, curriculum, and community.

The JIS campus is divided into two main campuses. The main JIS campus has buildings for the upper school, middle school, and lower school students. The campus of the JIS Early Childhood Center (ECC) is across the street from the main campus. Both parts of the campus require passing through a security guard booth and showing identification in order to gain access. The upper school building houses classrooms for grades nine through twelve, and JIS students change classes for every period of their school day as typical U.S. high school students do. The JIS middle school houses classrooms for grades six through eight, and students also move from class to class for each subject they study. The JIS lower school houses self-contained classrooms for grades one through five. And across the street from the main campus, the ECC offers self-contained pre-school and kindergarten classrooms.

All of JIS campus buildings appear vibrant and full of creative energy. The upper school is three stories high and has many large glass windows. The corridors are neat, lined with freshly painted student lockers, and have grey tile floors. Paintings and sculptures created by JIS students are featured in different sections of the building. All of the artwork is professionally presented, and would be just as at home on display in an art gallery as it is in the school. A typical upper school classroom has enough space for approximately twenty-four students to sit at two-person tables. Most classrooms place these tables in lines facing the front of the class.

Student work is posted on the walls of some classrooms, but adornment of these rooms is spare overall.

The classrooms of the JIS middle school building are positioned around a large central atrium with an open-air roof. The atrium has multiple potted trees and bushes, and café tables for students to sit and talk when they are not in class. There are three floors of classrooms surrounding this atrium. A typical middle school classroom is more animated than most of the upper school classrooms. Students sit at moveable desks, and the desks are shaped like upside down hearts that easily fit together to form a cluster of students sitting together. Some teachers place these desks in straight lines facing the front of the class, and others place between four and six desks together so that students work facing one another.

The JIS lower school is an older building than the first two. There are three floors of classrooms. First floor classrooms have doors that lead directly outside – either to the large asphalt playground that connects the lower school to the other parts of the main campus, or onto a shaded grove of trees on the perimeter of the campus. All of the lower school classrooms I saw had groups of heart-shaped desks placed together, so that students routinely worked facing three to five other students. All of the lower school classrooms I saw had an overwhelming amount of student work displayed on classroom walls – in most rooms, it seemed not one square inch of wall space remained untouched. Many teachers also hung clotheslines across the room and used them to hang additional student work from the ceiling as well as letters of the alphabet, numbers, and words in English and Spanish.

The JIS ECC campus is located across the street from the main campus. The ECC is a two story building that stretches and winds between four outdoor play areas. Most ECC classrooms are divided into learning stations for young children. They have large circular tables

that seat approximately eight students each and they have a large carpeted area for story reading. Students move about the room frequently, and also go outside for recess breaks on a regular basis.

The JIS campus also has a few buildings and outdoor areas shared by all students. Physical education buildings include two gymnasiums, an indoor swimming pool, multiple outdoor grass-seeded fields. A school bus garage is located beneath one of the larger fields, so that JIS students can safely arrive to and depart from the building without having to risk security problems with the outside world. The campus also has a relatively new performing arts building with a large auditorium and professional quality sound and lighting equipment. The heart of the campus is an outdoor central café with small café tables and a long counter that sells breakfast, lunch and snacks to students and staff throughout the day.

### **3.4.5 Participants**

Participants in this study are all RHU undergraduate seniors majoring in teacher education who provided informed consent. Interview data reveals that participants are all between twenty-one and twenty-three years old, excepting one twenty-six year old participant. Participants fulfill the final four weeks of their twelve-week student-teaching requirement by participating in this program. Twenty-four PSTs were selected for the IST program on the basis of completing an application and paying a deposit. No applicants were turned away. Within this group, there are eighteen white females, five white males, and one African American male. Twenty-two of these PSTs consented to participate in this research study: seventeen white females, four white males, and one African American male. The pre-test groups are explained more fully in the survey section. Data generated from the following six participants are included in this study.

**Annie.** Annie is a white female, early childhood certification candidate, and a member of the blue pre-test group. She has never traveled outside of the U.S. before and speaks no Spanish. Annie grew up in a town about twenty miles outside of a major Mid-Atlantic city.

**Elizabeth.** Elizabeth is a white female, elementary and special education certification candidate, and a member of the blue pre-test group. She has traveled to both the U.K. and Peru with RHU's spring break program, and she has visited Canada numerous times. She speaks no Spanish. Elizabeth grew up in a suburban area outside of a major Mid-Atlantic city.

**Lisa.** Lisa is a white female, elementary certification candidate, and a member of the blue pre-test group. She spent a month the previous year as a volunteer ESL teacher in Argentina, and has an intermediate level ability to speak and understand Spanish. Lisa is from a suburban area of a major East Coast city.

**Michelle.** Michelle is a white female, elementary certification candidate, and a member of the green pre-test group. Michelle travelled to Italy for a week as part of RHU's spring break program and has taken family vacations to Canada. She has taken a limited number of Spanish classes, giving her an elementary command of the language. Michelle is from a rural area in the Mid-Atlantic region, approximately ninety miles away from a major city.

**Renee.** Renee is a white female, a secondary English and Social Studies education certification candidate, and a member of the pink pre-test group. Renee travelled to both Greece and Italy for one week each as part of RHU's spring break program and has taken

family vacations in Canada. She speaks no Spanish. Renee grew up in a small town approximately 120 miles outside of a major MidAtlantic city.

**Samuel.** Samuel is a white male, secondary English education certification candidate, and a member of the pink pre-test group. The previous year, Samuel participated in a ten-day mission trip to Nepal. He has studied Spanish and is confident in his ability to communicate with others in Spanish. Samuel spent the first part of his life in the suburbs of a major city in the Midwest, and then his family moved to a rural area in the Mid-Atlantic region.

With the setting and participants of this research now described, my discussion now turns to how I generated data.

### **3.4.6 Data generation**

Data for this study were generated through participant observation, interviews, analysis of student journals and lesson plans, analysis of RHU and JIS policy and program documents, and surveys. I spent over three hundred and thirty hours in participant observation, I conducted and reviewed over twenty-two hours of interviews, I transcribed and analyzed fourteen hours of interview transcripts, I analyzed twelve student journals and six lesson plans, I reviewed eighteen different policy and program documents, and I analyzed twenty-two sets of pre- and post-trip surveys. Table 3 below summarizes all data I generated for this study and when it was generated. These sources were selected for this study design as ethnographic methods studies are intended to collect a range of data about participants, but draw most heavily from participant observation and interview data to answer research questions (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Spending this much time engaged in fieldwork and generating data gives me a deep and rich



understanding of the context that I am studying (Emerson et al., 1995). Survey data is also generated, which can be used as a tool in any research design (Borko et al., 2008). Drawing from this range of sources also aids me in triangulation of data, since comparing multiple data sources helps to ensure that I accurately interpret emergent data themes (Graue & Walsh, 1998) and increases the overall validity of study results (Kiely, 2005). Member checking of data occurred through a variety of ways. I frequently met with PSTs after observing them in Mexico to ask them clarifying questions about what I observed. Interview data were member checked during interviews, as I paraphrased interview responses back to participants to ensure I understood their responses. Member checking of journal data occurred via email correspondence with the participant after the trip when I had a question about something they wrote. These member checking endeavors improved the overall credibility of my study, as participants are in the best position to judge whether or not my study results believably describe what they say they learned about intercultural competence (Creswell, 2012).

**Table 3.** Data generation timeline

<b>Date</b>	<b>Data Generation</b>
September 2012 – March 2013	1. Participant observation (six pre-departure meetings) 2. Artifact collection: RHU policy/program documents
Week of April 8, 2013	Pre-test surveys via email
Weeks of April 15, April 22 (IST weeks 1-2)	1. Participant observation (classroom observations, group meetings, field trips) 2. Interviews (round 1) 3. Participants create journal entries & lesson plans 4. Artifact collection: JIS school documents
Week of April 29 (IST week 3)	1. Participant observation (classroom observations, group meetings, field trips) 2. Participants create journal entries & lesson plans 3. Artifact collection: JIS school documents
Week of May 6 (IST week 4)	1. Participant observation (classroom observations, group meetings, field trips) 2. Interviews (round 2) 3. Participants create journal entries & lesson plans 4. Artifact collection: JIS school documents

**Table 3** (continued)

Week of May 13 (last three days of program– return May 15)	1. Participant observation (group meetings, field trips) 2. Interviews (round 2) 3. Participants create journal entries & lesson plans 4. Artifact collection: JIS school documents and lesson plans
Weeks of June 17 – July 1 (four to six weeks after re- entry to U.S.)	Interviews (round 3) over phone
June – September 2013	Artifact collection: RHU policy / program documents

### **3.4.6.1 Participant observation**

Participant observation is one of the two primary data sources in this ethnographic methods study. This type of data generation requires that I observe participants in a face-to-face manner over an extended period of time, I focus on a few subjects in depth and not many subjects in a superficial manner, and that I attend to narrative description of what I see as opposed to measurement description (Graue & Walsh, 1998). Participant observation took place both at the RHU pre-trip meetings and in Mexico. Participant observation at RHU occurred during the six whole group pre-departure meetings. In Mexico, I observed participants teaching in JIS classrooms, during RHU-led group meetings, and during RHU-led field trips to Mexican cultural sites. I captured my observations by taking jottings in a small notebook and taking pictures on my cell phone throughout the day. I then reviewed both the jottings and pictures every evening and used them to construct written field notes about the day's events on my laptop computer.

A number of factors influenced my decision about whom to observe each day. Participants were divided into three sub-groups: blue, green, and pink. These sub-groups correspond to pre-trip survey score ranges. (This grouping process is more thoroughly explained in the survey section below.) Participant observation in the classrooms was varied initially so that I observed many participants from all three sub-groups during the first two weeks of their

four-week student teaching placement. During the third week, I narrowed my field of observation to include only participants in each of the three sub-groups that seemed to be particularly rich sources of data with respect to my research question, as researchers conducting participant observation should begin by describing the wide context that frames their study and work to narrow their field as they progress (Emerson et al., 1995). During the last week and a half of observations, I further limited the participants I observed to only those selected for a second interview during the final week of the program. (See interview section below for more detail on the interview selection process.)

#### **3.4.6.2 Interviews**

Interviews are the other primary data source in this study. Informant interviews were utilized to generate participant perspectives on both the IST experience and the RHU teacher education program that sponsors it. Interviews have been found to be a particularly effective data source for examining intercultural dimensions of participant learning (Hammer, 2012b; Hendershot & Sperandio, 2009; Myers & Zaman, 2009). Interviews enable me to see the IST experience through perspectives other than my own and interviewing multiple people about developing intercultural competence help me to describe this complex process (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Interviews were conducted with participants in three separate rounds. Fewer participants were interviewed each time, in an effort to focus data generation on the most data-rich participants. For the first round, I completed a twenty-minute introductory interview with all twenty-two consenting participants during the first week of the program. These interviews allowed me to make an initial connection with each participant and gave me information to narrow my field of study. All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participant. I asked two open-ended questions about their general experience in the IST

placement to date, and then two specific questions about their experience employing the developmental interviewing strategy described by Hammer (2012b). As this strategy indicates, I asked participants to describe some initial experiences they had in Mexico interacting with people culturally different than them, the strategies they used to navigate the situation, and their understanding of the situation's outcome. I focused on the use of this strategy during round one because it may prompt participants to offer descriptions of experiences directly relevant to the development of intercultural competence (Hammer). Once all round one interviews were completed, I reviewed recordings and took notes about each participant's ability to describe intercultural experiences and the sense they made of them. The four participants in each sub-group (blue, green and pink) who used the most descriptive detail when talking about intercultural interactions were included in the second round of interviews.

The second round of interviews involved twelve participants: four participants from each of the three sub-groups. These interviews lasted about thirty minutes each and occurred during the final four days we were in Mexico. I asked interview questions related to the developmental interviewing strategy (Hammer, 2012b) as well as additional open-ended questions that enabled them to talk more widely about how they make sense of their IST experience (Graue & Walsh, 1998). As interviewing is a very formal way of communicating and it is often difficult to get participants to talk about their experiences, I used my observation field notes to prompt them to talk about how they understand their IST experience (Campbell-Galman, 2007; Graue & Walsh, 1998). Once completed, I reviewed recordings and took notes about all twelve interviews. My notes focused on each participant's ability to describe in detail the experiences they had and the sense they made of them. I used my notes from these interviews as well as my participant observation field notes to select the two participants in each sub-group that seemed to be the

richest sources of data with respect to the research question. An additional participant was interviewed from the blue sub-group, as I had difficulty contacting another of the selected participants in this sub-group. Eventually all seven participants were interviewed in the third and final interview round.

The third round of interviews were conducted over the phone, four to six weeks after we returned to the U.S., were audio-recorded, and lasted about thirty minutes each. These final interviews were conducted a month after re-entry to the U.S. because many participants have significant insights about their study abroad experience only after returning to their home environment (Bradfield-Kreider, 2001; Cushner, 2007). Participants were asked to reflect on trip experiences according to the developmental interviewing strategy (Hammer, 2012b). They also responded to open-ended questions that prompted them to reflect upon their overall trip experience. Finally, participants were asked to talk specifically about what they noticed about student cultural differences in their classroom and how they adapted their teaching to anything they noticed. These final questions were based on tenants of culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010). Field notes and participant journal entries were used as discussion prompts. All interviews from rounds one, two, and three for these seven participants were then transcribed.

#### **3.4.6.3 Student journals and lesson plans**

Journals and lesson plans developed for JIS classrooms were gathered as data on the last day in Mexico. Very few PSTs wrote out lesson plans for their JIS student teaching so this data source was not very useful. In contrast, journals were rich data sources, as participants responded to specific prompts related to the research question. Participant journals have been found to be particularly important sources of data in exploring participant development in cultural immersion experiences (Hammer, 2012b; Parker & Dautoff, 2007) as journal writing encourages

participants to process and reflect on experiences (Hatch, 2002) and may help to promote intercultural competence. Participants were asked to respond to a number of structured journal prompts during the experience, as prompts that focus participants on describing experiences involving cultural differences may be effective in enabling participants to describe their own development in intercultural competence (Hammer, 2012b; Parker & Dautoff, 2007). Participants were also directed to write specifically about their experiences teaching at JIS. Dr. Jacobson told me before we travelled that many past students used the time they travel in busses on weekend excursions to write in journals. Therefore, I directed participants to respond to a structured journal prompt every Friday when we left Mexico City by bus. I also provided them with an additional structured prompt via email to complete on their own time every Tuesday, as there was no other time the group met during the week which would have allowed for journal writing. Sample prompts included: 1) What experiences have you had in the past week where you think cultural differences have influenced how you and your host family interact? 2) What experiences have you had at your student-teaching placement this week that would not have happened if you were still teaching in the United States? 3) What experiences did you have during this past weekend's fieldtrip in which cultural differences played a role? For each of these prompts, participants were asked to explain the situation, how they navigated the situation, and the situation's outcome.

#### **3.4.6.4 Policy and program documents**

RHU and JIS policy documents as well as RHU-designed program evaluations completed by the participants were artifact data sources. RHU policy documents were collected during pre-departure meetings and after the trip. JIS policy documents were collected while in Mexico. And RHU program evaluations were completed and collected on the flight home from Mexico.

These evaluations were completed anonymously, so they were of limited use as a data source for this study. These data were collected because artifact data collection is the least obtrusive way to collect data and helps me paint a rich description of context (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007). However, these data can be challenging to use as artifacts were not created in direct response to my research questions, so the information provided may only be loosely related to the study (Hatch, 2002; Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007).

#### **3.4.6.5 Surveys**

The Intercultural Development Index (IDI) survey is a fifty-question Likert scale survey with an added six demographic questions and a series of five open-ended questions at the end that ask participants to describe interactions they have had with people who are culturally different than them. Only the Likert-scale questions are used to arrive at a numerical IDI score. Participants take the survey online, and the IDI survey site calculates a score for each participant. As Hammer describes, this survey instrument is based on the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC) model (Hammer, 2012b) and gives numerical score for each participant correlating to one of the five levels of the IDC model. This survey was developed by Hammer et al. (2003) and is based on the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) first introduced by Bennett (1986, 1993). The survey was developed to fill a gap in assessing how competent people are in working across cultures by measuring peoples' orientations towards cultural difference (Hammer, 2009).

The IDI survey was selected as the pre-trip survey tool because it is considered to be a well-tested assessment that gives a valid and reliable assessment of an individual's orientation towards cultural differences (Hammer, 2011; Hammer et al., 2003). It has been used in over forty-five journal publications (Hammer, 2012a) including four recent studies of the

development of intercultural competence in PSTs (Johnson & Battalio, 2008; Mahon, 2003; Marx & Moss, 2011; Yuen & Grossman, 2009).

The IDI survey was administered as a pre-trip survey via an email link to participants one week before the IST experience. The survey results are utilized in the present study only as a means of grouping participants for observation and interviews. A comparison of the pre-trip survey scores and associated post-trip survey scores may be presented in a future research study. Use of this pre-trip survey gave me some information about each PST's knowledge and experiences related to intercultural competence before participating in the four week IST experience in Mexico. Use of this pre-trip survey responds to a call for more studies that take pre-service teacher background knowledge into account in research design (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Zeichner, 2011). Using a non-ethnographic data source also allows me to more accurately triangulate my understanding of ethnographic data, thereby increasing the overall validity of my study results (Graue & Walsh, 1998).

Participants were divided into three sub-groups based on their IDI pre-trip score. The blue sub-group includes eight participants whose pre-test scores were among the lowest in the group. Their pre-trip scores reflected monocultural mindsets (levels 1 & 2) as described by the IDI. These scores would be common for people with little or no experience or preparation related to interacting with people culturally different than them. The green group included five students whose mid-range IDI scores reflected that they were on the "cusp of minimization," which is an emerging transitional mindset (level 3) between having a monocultural mindset and an intercultural mindset. These scores would be common for people having some experience and preparation related to interacting with people culturally different than them. The last sub-group of ten participants, the pink sub-group, had the highest scores on the IDI. Scores in this



sub-group ranged between high transitional scores (level 3, minimization) and two scores in the highest category (level 5 – adaptation). These scores would be common for people who have had significant experience and preparation related to interacting with people culturally different than them. I used these sub-groups to make initial decisions about which participants I should observe and interview, so that I could attend to participant background knowledge and experience in my analysis. Participant responses to the open-ended questions at the end of the survey were coded as qualitative data.

### **3.4.7 Data analysis**

I analyzed qualitative data using the applied thematic analysis approach described by Guest et al. (2012). I employed the use of NVIVO software to manage my data during the analysis process. I read the data corpus with an eye toward the research question, “What do PSTs report as learning opportunities that are difficult to transfer into the U.S. context?” Preliminary themes emerged from the data inductively by constantly comparing what I read to this research question and coding data in NVIVO for these potential themes. Next, I noted which potential themes were relevant to the research question. These themes included ideas such as, “PSTs make comparisons between JIS classrooms and U.S. classrooms,” and “PSTs notice the close relationships between JIS teachers and students.” Once relevant potential themes were identified, I translated the themes into codes with specific definitions. I then passed through the data corpus again, marking code segments in NVIVO that showed the specific attributions as defined by the codes. To confirm the validity of the codes and definitions, I waited one week then repeated this process again, passing through the data corpus and marking code segments in NVIVO that showed the specific code attributions. Waiting a week between these two passes

through the data corpus improves the overall validity of my coding endeavors because I had to re-read all of the code definitions and compare them to the data segments again (Guest et al., 2012). Repeating this process a second time improved the overall reliability of my data, or the trustworthiness that my coding process was yielding quality results because I checked to be sure that I coded all of the data the same way both times (Bazely & Jackson, 2013). When codes were consistent, I continued coding with periodic re-checks. When codes were not consistent, I adjusted the definitions and re-coded as needed. Key codes that emerged through this process are displayed in Table 4 below. Only themes that were well substantiated by the data were pursued. Strongest themes included those related to PSTs making comparisons between their JIS classroom and their previous experience in U.S. schools (SCHOOL DIFF, TEACH ADAPT IN MEX) and what they noticed about JIS classroom dynamics between teachers and students (RELATIONSHIP, CLASS COMM STYLE). An additional theme, how PSTs saw their future teaching changing as a result of their IST experience (TEACH CHANGE), was also important to my overall data analysis. Analytic memoing occurred periodically throughout the coding process to explore patterns of meaning in themes and connections between them. Quotations that best illustrated each theme were selected to give voice to participants (Hendershot & Sperandio, 2009).

**Table 4.** Key analysis codes and definitions

<b>Code</b>	<b>Code Definition</b>
SCHOOL DIFF	Comparison of JIS & US curriculum, teaching style, class environment, physical space, planning expectations
TEACH ADAPT IN MEX	Adaptation to teaching between US & JIS
RELATIONSHIP	Description of student teacher relationship
CLASS COMM STYLE	Description of communication styles & differences in classroom
TEACH CHANGE	PST describes a way future teaching will change as a result of program

### **3.5 FINDINGS**

The PSTs in this study talk about a number of important learning and development opportunities they experienced while student teaching at JIS in Mexico. However, PSTs also reported that some of what they learned seemed challenging to transfer out of a private, international school context and into a U.S. public school context. Three key findings that emerged from the data relate to PSTs reporting that they struggle to see how expectations shape teaching and learning environments, they struggle with instructional shifts in constructing knowledge due to organizational and structural variations in different contexts, and are unsure how to create deep caring relationships that can serve as vehicles for student academic success in a U.S. public school context.

#### **3.5.1 Finding One: PSTs report they struggle to see how expectations of students shape a teaching and learning environment**

The first finding that emerged from the data is that PSTs report they have a difficult time understanding how expectations of students shape and a teaching and learning environment. Multiple RHU PSTs discuss the positive experience they have working with JIS co-op teachers, and the impact JIS's high expectations environment has on their conception of the work of teaching. They contrast these experiences with less positive student teaching experiences in U.S. urban classrooms. But without an understanding of how expectations shape student learning in the two environments, the PSTs seem to fall into the trap of simply seeing good teachers and good schools, and bad teachers and bad schools.

### **3.5.1.1 Lisa: Treating students “as people,” not as “subordinates”**

Three RHU PSTs described differences in the messages they received about the value of teaching between JIS and previous student teaching placements in U.S. schools. All three PSTs had previous student teaching experiences in urban school environments that seemed to set low expectations for students. Lisa is one of these PSTs. Lisa compares her JIS placement to her last student teaching placement in Rockbrook, a small urban characteristic district near RHU. Lisa said she “absolutely hated” her last placement in Rockbrook, mostly because of her co-op teacher (FN 13 0426-28). As Lisa described, her co-op Mrs. Vargenko usually sat at her desk all day, sending texts and emails from her phone. Lisa said she got no feedback at all from her co-op teacher, and that other teachers would frequently walk into her room and have loud conversations with Mrs. Vargenko while Lisa was teaching (FN 13 0426-28). As Lisa explains, she did not like teaching at Rockbrook because the messages she received there about teaching was that it was not a very worthwhile profession. Lisa continues to describe other negative messages she received about the value of teaching from Mrs. Vargenko:

She told me weekly, “You know, I hate this job, I can’t wait to change my career....”

She [also] said, “I would never let any of my children become teachers. I don’t know what parent would let their child become a teacher. It’s a thankless career.” And she would say all of this all the time. So I really didn’t like it there (Lisa 2).

From Lisa’s description, the Rockbrook classroom where she taught was one of very low expectations – both for the students and for her as a student teacher. It seems that messages were sent to her and the students that instruction was not important, her lessons were not worth improving, and that the efforts of Lisa and her students in the classroom did not deserve the respect of other teachers in the building. It would be very difficult to become excited about a

career in teaching when trained by a co-op teacher who sends such frequent negative messages about the teaching profession. In contrast, Lisa describes her experience working with Miss Melissa at JIS:

She's a very good teacher....Maybe its just the IB curriculum, but a lot of it is conversational, question asking, [and] discussion....So it was really a complete 180 to be in these classrooms....I was very happy not to be in Rockbrook any more. And Melissa, she loves her job. You can tell she has a lot of fun being a teacher....It was great. So definitely, to contrast, everything was completely different (Lisa 2).

Lisa's comments here highlight two key ideas. First, co-op teachers send important messages to PSTs that can significantly influence how a PST values the work of a teacher. If the co-op teacher treats teaching as a profession of value, and enjoys her work, the PST can learn to do the same. Second, school and teacher expectations of students can significantly impact how a co-op or PST conceptualizes the work of a teacher. From what Lisa says, a number of the teachers at Rockbrook seem to hold very low expectations of students and place little value on the work of teaching them. This is evidenced by their constant visiting and talking during her instruction time. JIS, on the other hand, seems to promote very high expectations for students, helping Lisa to see teaching as work that is both valuable and enjoyable. Although it is important for Lisa to see her work as a teacher as valuable, challenging and enjoyable, without an understanding of how expectations of students shaped both of her experiences, Lisa may fall into the erroneous belief that only teaching in high opportunity contexts like JIS is worthwhile and enjoyable.

In addition to impacting her conception of the value of teaching, Lisa believes her IST experience sent her messages about valuing the students one teaches. This is something she

thinks she learned both from her co-op and the overall context of JIS. Lisa paints a grim picture of how her Rockbrook co-op teacher treated her students. She describes,

[Mrs. Vargenko] was a terrible teacher...she was rigid, abrasive, like flat out mean to her students. The students didn't really like her that much. She was third grade, and she was not the teacher you wanted to be assigned to. She was very strict. She didn't like talking, so everything was done in silence and it was all workbook (Lisa 2).

It would be very difficult for any PST to learn how to treat students when using only Mrs. Vargenko as a role model. Lisa offers a very different description when describing how her JIS co-op, Miss Melissa, interacted with students:

[Miss Melissa] has a very conversational relationship with her students, she is very friendly...there are always kids...just in and out of our room...just talking to her. They feel very comfortable with her....They don't seem intimidated by her much. So I've really learned from her...how much of a difference it makes to be [open] with your students (Lisa 2).

As Lisa describes, she seems to learn from Miss Melissa's example the importance of treating students as people, not just as learners. In other words, she learns the importance of caring for students more than how they behave and perform in her class. This sort of deep caring relationship helps students succeed academically (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, 2010a). Lisa appears to notice that Miss Melissa's interactions with her students seem to indicate that she genuinely likes them, and that they are worthy of her time and efforts. As a result, they seek out her company and guidance even between classes. It seems that Miss Melissa has high expectations of her students, enjoys working with them, and they appear to respond to her interest in them. Lisa's Rockbrook co-op Mrs. Vargenko, on the other hand, gave

Lisa the impression that she did not want to spend any more time or effort on her students than was absolutely required. She seems to have very low expectations of her students, dislikes working with them, and her students are aware of this. And although Lisa identifies a difference between the two, seeing Mrs. Vargenko as “a terrible teacher” and Miss Melissa as “a very good teacher,” Lisa does not seem to be aware of the role student expectations have in the interactions these two teachers have with their students (Lisa 2).

Lisa continues to reflect on how she thinks teachers should interact with students in a later interview, noting that treating students as people worthy of respect and kindness seems to be part of the overall JIS culture and not just something that Miss Melissa does on her own. Lisa considers this shift in how she herself regards students to be the most important lesson she learned at JIS, and something that will help her in future U.S. classrooms. Lisa shares:

The most important thing I learned is [that]....If you...treat your...students...like adults, they will act a little more mature for you. Maybe that’s the culture of JIS, but that’s one of the aspects I really liked, especially coming from Rockbrook where its more like, “you are a child, we will treat you like a child, stay within these confines,...don’t talk....”

Treating students like people, not...like subordinates. So I think that will be the most beneficial (Lisa 3).

Again, Lisa learns important lessons at JIS about treating students with high expectations and respect, but she does not acknowledge the role of student expectations has in shaping the learning experience in each school.

Lisa hopes that she can carry some of the insights she learned at JIS into her future work in a U.S. classroom. When asked what changes she would make if she returned to Rockbrook as a teacher after her time at JIS, the ideas she offers show that she has received more positive

messages about teaching, and feels more positively about being a teacher than she did before JIS. Lisa says she would try to “get the students more involved” in her lessons, try to make her lessons “as exciting as possible,” and treat her students in such a way that they “feel comfortable talking to me” (Lisa 3). But although Lisa has good intentions to see her role as a teacher in a positive way once she returns to a U.S. classroom, it is not clear whether or not she will be able to sustain her outlook over time. If she returns to a low expectations environment in the U.S. more like Rockbrook, where positive role models are scarce and the overall context do not seem to promote student success, Lisa may find it difficult to maintain such an optimistic attitude about the work of a teacher and the students she teaches. Lisa may benefit from a better understanding of how student expectations shape classrooms and schools, so that she can communicate that she has high expectations for her students even if she returns to a low expectations environment.

### **3.5.1.2 Annie: “We can expect more out of our kids”**

Annie is another PST who participated in the IST program. Annie feels she learned a lot at JIS that shaped her understanding of teaching. Like Lisa, Annie’s last student teaching placement was at Rockbrook, and she seems to describe it as an environment of low expectations for students. In contrast, she seems to describe JIS as an environment with high expectations for students. Annie compares Rockbrook to her placement at JIS:

Everything was different. My third grade [in Rockbrook]... was a lot of seatwork and tedious work that they had to get done. They didn’t have a choice....coming to Mexico [the lessons were] ...all hands-on,...I just loved it (Annie 2).

As Annie describes, the work itself in the two schools was strikingly different for both teachers and students. Whereas at Rockbrook Annie could only offer students limited choices and was



required to lead students in a lot of “tedious seatwork,” at JIS teachers led students in “hands-on” lessons with opportunities for many types of engagement (Annie 2). Annie continues reflecting on her JIS experience, discussing how it shifted her thinking about the work of a teacher and the importance of having high expectations for students. She shares,

[I learned that] the way that we do things [in the U.S.] is just so uptight....it’s so terrible. Back in my third grade class, the [students] did [state assessment] books all day long....We’ve always been told...to engage the students...but I’ve learned it’s importance here [at JIS]....[Before] I was really going through the motions I think. We can expect more out of our kids than we do. Higher level thinking. That’s what its all about here....The first day I was here they were painting, and Miss Olivia was like, “Don’t forget to use the negative space.” And I was like, “What the heck is negative space?” And they colored the background....I was like, “Are you kidding me? They are five years old! They know what negative space is?”....I love this place (Annie 2).

For Annie, the overall context of the JIS school environment has helped her to shift how she understands the work of teaching. Her thinking has shifted from seeing the work of teaching as “uptight” and consisting of having students complete stat assessment prep books “all day long” to creative work that promotes “higher level thinking” (Annie 2). This shift helped her move from regarding teaching as the stressful work of preparing students to pass state assessments to seeing it as a creative endeavor that stimulates higher level thinking among students. Annie’s reaction to this shift in context also sheds light on how the current emphasis on high stakes testing in U.S. schools may shape PST development. Although Annie appears to learn at JIS to regard teaching as exciting work that promotes high expectations for students and stimulates “higher level thinking,” had she stayed at Rockbrook, she might have come to believe that all

teaching looks like the low-expectations “seat work and tedious” tasks she led students in at Rockbrook (Annie 2). This also raises questions about the impact of the high stakes testing environment over the long term on teacher development. Are we shifting how an entire generation of U.S. teachers regards the practice of teaching? Are we shifting it away from being seen as a creative endeavor that inspires “higher level thinking” to a “tedious” job that merely trains students to memorize, complete workbooks, and pass tests (Annie 2)?

Like Lisa, Annie also seems to learn at JIS that teachers who have high expectations of students interact with them in a different manner than teachers with low expectations of students. Here, Annie describes how her co-op Miss Olivia interacts with her students:

The way she talks to the kids is just like incredible.... It’s like a respect thing I think. They respect her so much, and she shows them respect....In the States we are told to just get your point across and be done. Like, “Sit down, tie your shoe, go to the bathroom.” Here it’s just like she elaborates and uses all of these big words. And the kids know exactly what she is saying and they are listening....If I was at home and I was to talk like Miss Olivia they would just turn the other way and go play (Annie 2).

Annie brings up a few important points in this passage. First, she seems to learn a new way to interact with her students by watching Miss Olivia’s example. Like Lisa’s co-op, Annie’s co-op Miss Olivia seems to treat her students as if they are well deserving of her time and attention. Second, Annie realizes her teacher education program has not taught her to interact with students in this way. Annie sees her teacher education program at RHU promoting a much more task-oriented approach to communicating with students, and paying much less attention to communicating with students in a way that demonstrates deep caring and high expectations. This seems troubling, as it appears from what Annie says that some portions of the RHU teacher

program could be preparing students to create and teach in environments of low student expectations. And finally, although she learns a lot about how to interact with students from her student teaching experience at JIS, she doesn't think U.S. students would respond to her in the same way JIS students respond to Miss Olivia. This disconnect points to the idea that Annie does not understand how the expectations a teacher holds for her students shapes the way she interacts with them. Furthermore, Annie may feel powerless to challenge the expectations of students held in low expectations environments like Rockbrook seems to be. Annie could benefit from having a better understanding of how student expectations shape a learning environment, and how teachers can create high expectations for students in any environment.

Annie summarizes her learning at the end of the trip, attributing what she learns about how to interact with students specifically to her co-op teacher. She writes in her journal,

I have learned so in the past month, and I attribute that to Ms. Olivia. She has taught me to communicate with students in a different way than I'm used to....I've learned many new ways to engage the students....[and] I've learned to word my questions in a way that make the students think as well....She has taught me to challenge the kids more, and she's also taught me to expect more out of them because they are capable of it....Teaching is all about how you approach things (Annie Journal 5.10).

Overall, Annie's JIS experience seems to help her to develop a better sense of what high expectations environments look like, and what student interactions look like in this type of environment. Although she attributes her learning mostly to her co-op Miss Olivia, it seems like the overall context of JIS also plays a role. Although Annie seems to need some additional support making connections between these ideas in order to apply them in different contexts, it is

clear she has learned a lot about the power of holding high expectations for students during her time at JIS.

### **3.5.1.3 Renee: “I was able to teach mostly me”**

Renee is another PST who sees her student teaching experience at JIS as positively influencing her understanding of the work of a teacher. In this passage, Renee compares her student teaching experience at JIS to her last student teaching placement at Rockefeller, an urban emergent high school in a mid-sized city, located ninety miles away from RHU. She reflects,

I was given all the freedom in the world here [at JIS], whereas I wasn't at Rockefeller....My co-op at Rockefeller was very worried about if things were going to work. She would not let me try to have a discussion in the class. If I wanted to have a discussion she would [say], “well that really doesn't work....” But here I'm given all the freedom to do what I wanted, and I feel like I was able to teach mostly me (Renee 2).

Renee's IST experience at JIS seems to enable her to be the kind of teacher she wanted to be: one that promotes critical thinking and high engagement among students during lessons. It seems that Renee aspires to hold high expectations for all of the students she teaches, and she wants to help her students meet these high expectations. She had tried to approach teaching in this way at Rockefeller, but it seems that the context and her co-op didn't support her approach. Renee continues this reflection, thinking about what she would have missed had she stayed at Rockefeller for all of her student teaching instead of participating in the IST experience at JIS:

If I would have continued at Rockefeller, I think my view of teaching would have been kind of stunted. Because at Rockefeller, you kind of just like have to follow the system. There's not a whole lot of freedom....[At JIS], the view of teaching is much more open-minded and very creative. And that's what I'm really hoping to do in a classroom is be

creative and try new things. Not just hand out worksheets. And that's what I did a lot of at Rockefeller. So I feel that this has been a very positive experience and it has kind of reinforced some of my hopes about teaching (Renee 2).

As Renee explains, both the overall student teaching placement context and the co-op teacher in each school affected how she approached the work of a teacher. At Rockefeller, Renee saw teaching as a job with little autonomy that consists mostly of "handing out worksheets" (Renee 2). It seems from this description that Rockefeller may be a very low expectations environment for students. At JIS, Renee sees herself as a "creative" professional who organizes engaging class activities for students – as she had originally hoped she could be as a teacher (Renee 2). As previously described, JIS seems to be a high expectations environment, and Renee's understanding of a teacher's work in this environment seems to reflect that. It is unclear, however, if Renee will be able to continue to conceptualize teaching as a creative and engaging career if she returns to work in a U.S. context that is more like Rockbrook and less like JIS. Renee does not seem to understand how the expectations teachers hold for students shape teacher views of what the work of teaching is all about. Furthermore, she does not seem to understand the power she has to raise her expectations for students in low expectations schools, or how she can leverage the relationships she forms with students to meet higher academic expectations.

Renee's experience at JIS also seems to illuminate how a co-op teacher's and a school's low expectations for students can shape a PST's understanding of teaching. I capture some of Renee's reflections in my field notes (FN 23 0508) at the end of her placement at JIS, as she compares her experience with her last placement at Rockefeller. She didn't think Rockefeller, her last placement, was bad, she liked those kids too. But her JIS co-op has been "wonderful" to work with, in contrast to the last one she had. She said that her last co-op teacher at Rockefeller

had “pretty much given up” on the eleventh grade, and didn’t give Renee much feedback on her teaching. Renee thought the biggest difference between Rockefeller and JIS is that at Rockefeller, “the system is bad” because focus on state assessment testing so much. She thinks a lot of Rockefeller teachers just gave up on the students, and there were a lot of discipline problems. She thinks the biggest difference between JIS and Rockefeller is that in the JIS eighth grade, none of the teachers seem to have given up on the students. Again, Renee highlights the importance of both the overall school context and the co-op teacher in shaping a PST’s understanding of the work involved in teaching. As Renee described, it seemed that many Rockefeller teachers held very low expectations for many of their students, and some seemed to “give up” on helping some students learn. She attributes the way Rockefeller teachers treat their students to the education system they are working in, and its focus on high stakes testing. JIS teachers seem to hold higher expectations for their students, and interact with all of them as if they are capable of success. From what Renee says, it is not clear that she sees the power she has to challenge low expectations environments in schools like Rockefeller and the opportunity she has to develop relationships with these students to make their learning experience more like that of the JIS students. It seems she might have more success transferring what she learned about high expectations teaching to different environments if she had a better understanding of her power as a teacher to create high expectations learning regardless of the context in which she works.

Overall, it appears that both the overall context of a school and individual co-ops shape how a PST understands the work of a teacher. The contrasting experiences Lisa, Annie, and Renee have in U.S. urban schools and at JIS seem to suggest that PSTs can learn to create high expectations learning environments like they experienced at JIS, but that they may need help

developing a more complex understanding of the relationship between the expectations schools and teachers have of students, what teaching in that environment actually looks and feels like, and the power teachers have to create high expectations classrooms in any context. From what Lisa, Annie, and Renee say, the work of teaching in U.S. public schools contexts is largely presented as the work of test preparation, not teaching higher level thinking or promoting creativity. This impacts both how PSTs conceptualize their work as teachers and may push many new teachers into low expectations mindsets.

### **3.5.2 Finding Two: PSTs report struggle to make instructional shifts in constructing knowledge due to organizational and structural variations in the different contexts**

A second finding that emerged from the data highlights the idea that working at JIS seems to shift the thinking of some PSTs about the process of classroom knowledge construction. This shift moves some PSTs from seeing the teacher as classroom knowledge authorities to viewing a teacher's role as a learning guide. By classroom knowledge authority, I mean the teacher sees himself or herself as the sole authority for all classroom knowledge. By learning guide, I mean the teacher sees knowledge construction as a shared endeavor between teacher and students. Conceptualizing knowledge as continuously recreated, developed jointly by teachers and students, and requiring a critical lens is a characteristic of effective culturally relevant teachers (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Some PSTs seem to learn about shared knowledge construction through participation in the overall context at JIS, as both the school culture in general and IB curriculum in particular promote a sense of inquiry and development of critical thinking skills among students. However, although some PSTs say they see the merits of viewing classroom knowledge construction as a shared endeavor between teachers and students, they express doubts

that they can replicate this shared knowledge construction approach once they return to the context of a U.S. public school classroom.

### **3.5.2.1 Michelle: Transferring teaching practices to new contexts can be “overwhelming”**

Some PSTs find that their JIS experience helps them to shift from viewing teachers as classroom knowledge authorities to viewing teachers as learning guides. Michelle is one PST who seems to learn a lot about constructing knowledge along with students by working at JIS. She describes the difference in approaches to knowledge construction between JIS and her past student teaching placement at Primrose Elementary, an urban characteristic school located thirty miles from RHU’s campus.

In Primrose, my cooperating teacher...was more of an authority figure....she cared for the students...and wanted them to learn, but...she was the boss and you knew it....the all-knowing teacher....In Mexico, it was...more like a partnership. The teachers...made everyone feel like an equal....they are not just blurting [the content] out...like, “well this is the answer because it’s the answer”....[Students] are involved and using their minds to try to figure something out, [so] the next time that they try to figure it out, they will go through the same thought process (Michelle 3).

As Michelle explains, JIS teachers serve more as knowledge construction guides and less as classroom knowledge authorities. Michelle seems to embrace this shift in role. In the next passage, Michelle describes what it was like for her to make this shift to a shared knowledge construction stance at JIS:

I really liked it. I thought that they learned better. It’s not like I’m up there, the all-knowing teacher, I would just ask them questions and pretend like I didn’t know the answers....For a little bit there, I almost felt like I wasn’t doing my job. Because that’s



not exactly how I learned how to do it....In [teacher education] classes you learn that you have to know the content, and basically be a know-it-all.... I felt like I had to stop being that know-it-all. And kind of let them figure it out themselves....So its just kind of like guiding their conversation, and if they get off track trying to guide them back to kind of where you want them to be (Michelle 3).

For Michelle, it seems that working at JIS allows her to transform her thinking about a teacher's role from that of classroom knowledge authority to that of a learning guide. She identifies her teacher education program as the place she learned that teachers should be classroom knowledge authorities. This is somewhat surprising as the RHU teacher education program mission promotes respect for diverse families and communities as a central feature, yet seems to prepare new teachers to discourage students from making alternative knowledge claims<sup>24</sup>. This insight may lead to new ideas about how U.S. teacher education programs can better promote teaching practices that support the academic success of culturally diverse students (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009). As Michelle describes, working at JIS seems to shift her thinking about a teacher's role towards that of a learning guide.

Michelle hopes to use what she has learned at JIS about sharing knowledge construction in U.S. classrooms, but has some concerns about her potential to be successful in the U.S. context. When asked if she sees herself treating future students more as equals in constructing classroom knowledge Michelle replies, "Yes, definitely" (Michelle 3). However, Michelle is unsure of the extent to which she will be able to replicate this shared knowledge construction approach in a U.S. public school context. Michelle seems to view the way she learned to teach at JIS very differently than how she learned to teach in a U.S. context, and transferring what she learned from one context to the other seems to require a significant leap for her. She talks about

her feelings around transferring what she learned at JIS into a U.S. context by describing her experience returning to her former Primrose classroom after her IST experience at JIS:

I went back to see my old [Primrose] classroom. And whenever I walked into that classroom, I felt like a completely different teacher because of what I had seen in Mexico....It was kind of like I was sent in [to Mexico] the Primrose teaching way, and I got to JIS and [over time] I was...teaching like them, and thinking like them. And when I went back [to Primrose after Mexico] I almost didn't know what to do because I was like, "Wait. I am at an American public school again." And they just took the [state assessments]....it was just ...a little bit overwhelming. (Michelle 3)

For Michelle, the experience of promoting shared classroom knowledge construction at JIS was so different than her classroom role at Primrose, returning to her Primrose class after JIS actually causes her anxiety. Some of this anxiety may be alleviated if Michelle had a better understanding of how context shapes a learning environment. The diversity opportunity gap conceptual framework (Milner, 2010a) remind suggests that students in different settings have access to different resources and opportunities in their education. JIS students seem to have access to a high expectations environment, where they are expected to learn to think critically and solve problems. The many wealthy families who are part of the JIS community have access to financial and material resources that enrich student learning. It seems from Michelle's description that Primrose students learn in an environment of much lower expectations, where success on high stakes testing appears to be valued over most other learning goals, and students do not seem to have as many of the resources or opportunities as JIS students. By developing a more nuanced understanding of how context shapes each learning environment, Michelle may

have an easier time shifting important teaching practices she learns at JIS into an environment more like Primrose.

Nevertheless, Michelle hopes to continue to utilize a shared approach to knowledge construction in her future U.S. classroom teaching, despite limitations she sees in doing so in U.S. classrooms. When asked if she will continue to approach construction of knowledge from the stance of a learning guide in her next classroom she responds,

Yes. I definitely want them to be able to figure out as much as I can, as much as a public school will let me do....there's always the time and the restrictions with the testing, but I want to be able to have my own freedom a little bit, and kind of let them come to conclusions themselves. Because that's what you do in real life. (Michelle 3)

As Michelle describes, although she intends to utilize techniques to promote the shared construction of knowledge in her future U.S. classrooms, she sees the context of U.S. public schools as restrictive of this practice because of the pressure to prepare for high stakes testing and to cover all of the required content. When asked how she would bring what she learned about shared knowledge construction to a U.S. classroom she offers:

I think I would try to do much more...discussion-oriented...teaching. I did some of it in Primrose, but since it was close to the [state assessments] it was hard to be creative with the teaching....It was like, "Let's teach you how to bubble in A, B, C, D, E!"....So I'd really like to...include more of a discussion-type technique. (Michelle 3)

Given the limitations Michelle thinks that she faces in a U.S. public school context in maintaining a shared knowledge construction stance, she hopes to at least make incremental changes in the way she approaches teaching in a U.S. classroom. She shares:

I know I can't teach exactly like that here [in the U.S.], but I can take away the large discussions and try to incorporate some of that. And...anything where they can get their hands on something, like doing some sort of hands on project, I saw a lot of that there [at JIS]. And we can't do that as much here, but I'd like to do as much as I can. (Michelle 3)

It is unfortunate that Michelle seems to feel that the U.S. public school context pushes her away from being a learning guide who promotes the shared construction of knowledge, particularly since she seems to believe that this is how students learn best. However, if she learns more about how context shapes learning in both environments, she may have an easier time transferring the teaching practices she learned at JIS into a U.S. public school context.

### **3.5.2.2 Samuel: “People first,” rather than “goal first”**

Samuel is another PST who noticed that JIS teachers have different stances with respect to knowledge construction than he has encountered in U.S. schools. Samuel's previous student teaching experience was at Rockefeller, the urban high school where Renee was also placed. He notices contextual differences in how JIS and Rockefeller organize instructional time. In this passage, Samuel describes how the overall organization of instructional time at JIS allows teachers to serve as learning guides rather than classroom knowledge authorities:

It was a double period....about eighty minutes....I noticed that we had more down time....just a couple of minutes just to build that rapport with the students instead of...[moving] on to the next activity....You are not always giving them another worksheet, fill this out, they are able to...independently work....The teacher can just...go around the room and...help students who need help rather than just stand up there and give directions constantly (Samuel 1).

For Samuel, the way learning time is organized at JIS allows teachers to serve as learning guides who can circulate through the class and help individual students as they work independently. He recognizes that how JIS organizes instructional time gives teachers opportunities to promote student academic success, instead of having to push through a set amount of content to be covered. Samuel seems to prefer this to how he saw learning structured at Rockefeller: where the teacher stood in the middle of the room constantly giving directions and pushing students through worksheet-based activities during short blocks of time. He even recognizes that the way learning time is structured at JIS seems to make more room for him to build relationships with his students. Building relationships with students is a key practice of effective classroom teachers (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, 2010a).

Even though Samuel seems to shift his thinking towards a shared model of knowledge construction by working at JIS, he appears to have doubts about his ability to maintain this stance once he returns to U.S. public school classrooms. Samuel describes how he thinks pressure to cover a certain amount of material in U.S. schools pushes U.S. teachers to approach the construction of classroom knowledge as classroom knowledge authorities, even if they do not believe it is the best approach. He explains,

In the States you are rushing, you are talking quickly. Because you have like a 42 minute period....You are cramming it in, and you really don't have time for best practice in the States, but you definitely do here [at JIS]. (Samuel 1)

Samuel continues this comparison in a later interview, preferring the JIS context because he seems to believe that he can focus on student comprehension instead of feeling pressured to cover a set amount of material as he does when in a U.S. classroom. Samuel considers this a difference in cultural practices between U.S. and Mexican classrooms. He offers,

I like being in a...place that you are...making sure that students understand....I think that's...cultural....Gauging...where the students are at...and making sure they get it...rather than....getting through your lesson plan....Just that sort of, “people first” rather than “goal first”...mindset....We [U.S. Americans] are very goal-oriented, and I think a lot of other cultures are people-oriented (Samuel 2).

For Samuel, there is a significant difference in learning contexts between JIS and U.S. schools. In the U.S., Samuel feels pressured to cover a lot of content and rushed, pushing him to adopt a classroom knowledge authority stance in knowledge construction. At JIS, Samuel does not seem to feel this same pressure, and appears to see teachers acting as learning guides who take their time to ensure student comprehension of their lessons. Samuel does seem to have some understanding of how the context of each setting shapes the learning that occurs in each one. However, a better understanding of how context shapes what teachers do and what students actually learn in each setting may further his understanding, and help him to see how he can implement a shared construction of knowledge model in a U.S. environment, even if the school context has a greater emphasis on standardized testing and covering a set amount of material. As Samuel already acknowledges the importance of relationship building, he may have some success implementing this practice in the U.S. as well.

### **3.5.2.3 Lisa: “Students can learn a lot from each other”**

Shifting in stance from classroom knowledge authority to learning guide at JIS helps some PSTs see the role of peers in a student’s learning in a new light. Lisa is one PST who sees a new role for peers in the classroom after her time at JIS. When asked what she learned about the process of classroom knowledge construction at JIS, Lisa responds that she learned “students can learn a lot from each other and to not underestimate that. And I feel like I learned that a lot in Mexico”

(Lisa 3). For Lisa, peers contribute to classroom knowledge construction by adding ideas and advancing each others' thinking about a topic. So not only do some PSTs shift how they think about the role of a teacher in knowledge construction while at JIS, but some shift how they think about the role of a student's peers in the construction of knowledge as well. Shifting her teaching practices towards student learning from peers will help Lisa develop social relations in her classroom that more closely approximate those of effective culturally relevant teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). A shift in this way will help Lisa work towards promoting student learning and cultural competence, two tenants of culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Valuing student learning from peers promotes student learning, as teaching one's classmates may allow a student to move towards mastery of academic content himself/herself. It promotes cultural competence because the knowledge and contributions each student has are valued as important for all students.

However, like Michelle and Samuel, Lisa struggles to envision how to implement a learning guide stance towards knowledge construction in U.S. classrooms. When asked what she would do differently at Rockbrook after her IST experience at JIS, Lisa immediately brings up the impact high stakes testing had on her teaching experience there. She explains,

It was hard with the [state standardized tests] coming up...you can only do so much....If it was my own classroom I really would have tried to get them more involved and more interested. I would have probably tried to deviate from the curriculum more, and...make things more fun for them, more relevant for them. That's probably what I would do differently (Lisa 3).

Although Lisa seems to see the value of engaging students as co-constructors of knowledge after her time at JIS, she feels Rockbrook teachers are constrained by pressure to prepare students for

high stakes testing. Like Samuel, it seems like this contextual pressure makes Lisa feel like she must remain in a classroom knowledge authority role in order to get her students ready for the state assessment. Engaging her students more, to Lisa, would require “deviating” from Rockbrook’s curriculum. If Lisa had a better understanding of both how these contextual pressures were shaping learning opportunities in Rockbrook, she may have an easier time transferring what she learned about knowledge construction from one context to another.

Overall, working at JIS seems to help some PSTs shift their thinking about a teacher’s role in classroom knowledge construction. It seems to help them to see that allowing students to be co-creators of knowledge can help them to engage more deeply in the learning process, and it also seems to help PSTs see how much students can learn from their peers. These are important practices related to effective culturally relevant teaching. However, it seems that these PSTs feel that the U.S. public school context inhibits their ability to maintain a learning guide stance towards classroom knowledge construction in U.S. classrooms. They identify pressure on teachers to cover a set amount of material and to prepare students to do well on high stakes testing as reasons why a learning guide stance is difficult in U.S. classrooms. They believe this pressure forces U.S. teachers into classroom knowledge authority stance, even if the teacher believes this is not the way students learn best. By developing a more nuanced understanding of how context shapes a learning environment, these three teachers might be able to make the connections needed to shift more into a role of teacher as guide in a U.S. public school context.



### **3.5.3 Finding Three: PSTs are unsure how to create deep caring relationships that can serve as vehicles for student academic success in a U.S. public school context**

Many PSTs in this group say that they were impressed by the deep caring relationships they witnessed between teachers and students at JIS. By deep caring relationships, I mean relationships in which teachers care about the well-being of their students as people, not simply as learners. This focus on relationships may be particularly important in teaching culturally diverse students, as these relationships can act as a bridge for students to access academic content taught in the class (Milner, 2010a). Although the PSTs in this study report learning the value of forming deep caring relationships with their students at JIS, they do not see these relationships as vehicles for student academic success and they are unsure how to implement this practice once they return to work in the context of U.S. public school classrooms.

#### **3.5.3.1 Lisa: Becoming a teacher who can “make a difference”**

Lisa is one PST who seemed to learn about the value of deep caring relationships during her IST experience at JIS. As previously mentioned, Lisa’s student teaching placement before JIS was in Rockbrook, an urban characteristic district near RHU. Lisa describes her Rockbrook cooperating teacher, Mrs. Vargesco, as a teacher who “hated talking” with and among students (Lisa 2). The example that Mrs. Vargesco set for Lisa made left a significant impression and set the tone for how Lisa interacted with her Rockbrook students. She explains that since Mrs. Vargesco discouraged talking, “[I] couldn’t have a conversation with [a student]” (Lisa 2). Lisa seems to admit that she didn’t try even to get to know her Rockbrook students on a personal level even though it appears they really needed caring adults in their lives. She says: “A lot of my kids’ stories were very heartbreaking, [and] I almost didn’t want to know them...I know that sounds

terrible” (Lisa 2). By following the example set by her co-op, Lisa appeared to avoid getting to know her Rockbrook students and kept her relationships with them at a very superficial level. This pushed Lisa into a very low expectations mindset, and her lack of relationship with her students probably made it difficult to support their academic success.

At JIS, Lisa seemed to have a very different experience. She was impressed by how frequently students sought out her cooperating teacher, Miss Melissa, for guidance with problems both inside and outside of school. As Lisa got to know her JIS students over the month, she followed Miss Melissa’s example of working towards developing deep caring relationships with them. She says, “I think [the JIS students] responded very well to me because I was just curious about their life” (Lisa 2). She continues in a later interview: “I really enjoyed [getting to know them]...I thought it was wonderful” (Lisa 3). As Lisa explains, she seems to be able to develop relationships with her JIS students that go deeper than the superficial ones she had with students in Rockbrook. She also appears to see deep caring relationships as part of the school culture at JIS, and furthermore, she seems to enjoy relating to students this way. Lisa reflects on what she learns about developing deep caring relationships:

[In Mexico] I definitely learned the importance...of developing relationships with your students....Each student has a story....sometimes it’s hard to remember that they have lives outside of school...I think its important to know that about the students and to integrate that into your classroom....Once you have like an emotional relationship with a student, its just so much different (Lisa 3).

As Lisa realizes at JIS, developing a deep caring or “emotional” relationship with a student can completely change a teacher’s perspective and shifts how a teacher approaches each student.

It appears that Lisa's experience at JIS helps her to shift her concept of how teachers should relate to students. Lisa believes that exposure to this deep caring relationship style at JIS will influence how she interacts with students in the future. When asked to describe how she sees her work as a teacher in the future she shares,

I'd like to...bond with students in a way that they would feel comfortable...talking to me, and...have an open door type classroom where I can help people....School is a lot more difficult for some people than for others. But if you have a confidant, a teacher you can go to, then that can really make a difference for some students....I'd like to think that I can be that type of teacher (Lisa 3).

Although Lisa learned the importance of developing a deep caring relationship too late to benefit her Rockbrook students, it seems her future students will benefit. Overall she reflects on her IST experience, "I learned more here [at JIS] in one month than I did in all of my student teaching, about how to be a teacher" (Lisa 2). As Lisa describes it, it appears that her IST experience will have a significant impact on her teaching practice. At Rockbrook Lisa seemed to learn from her co-op teacher that her students were not worth getting to know because their stories were "too heartbreaking" and she could not expect to help them much (Lisa 2). But at JIS, Lisa seems to realize that developing a deep caring relationship with a student can be the most meaningful part of a teacher's role and lead to a teacher helping a student a great deal.

As Lisa's story may demonstrate, it seems to be possible to shift a PST's concept of teaching from a job that focuses only on delivering academic content to a job that also involves demonstrating deep care for students. However, it seems that Lisa makes no connections between forming deep caring relationships with students and supporting their academic success. Lisa would benefit from support that helps her make this connection. It also remains to be seen

if Lisa will be able to sustain deep caring relationships if she returns to the U.S. and works in a school where deep caring relationships between teachers and students are not the norm. Lisa's experience at JIS raises a few questions as she looks to her next teaching position in a U.S. classroom. First, can Lisa sustain the practice of developing deep caring relationships once she returns to a U.S. classroom, even if she does not work in a context where these relationships are the norm? What types of support would make it more likely that she could sustain this practice of developing deep caring relationships with students? Does she need a mentor teacher who continues to model this practice, or does she need to work in a school where school culture promotes these relationships school-wide like JIS? Furthermore, are relationships easier for teachers to build in high expectations environments? What about low expectations environments – how can Lisa build and sustain relationships there?

### **3.5.3.2 Renee: Other mothering may be too much**

Even though many of these PSTs agree that they learned about the value of deep caring relationships during their IST experience, some of them are not convinced that these lessons will be transferrable to the context of U.S. classrooms. Renee is one PST who holds this opinion. Renee describes her reaction to seeing her JIS co-op enact a deep caring relationship style with her students: “My teacher [gave] students hugs, tousle their hair, and talk about their family a lot....I liked it, but it was...very weird to see” (Renee 3). Although this familiarity between teachers and students seems strange to her, Renee appears to see the value of enacting deep relationships with students and likes the idea of adopting this style with her future students. When asked if student teaching at JIS influenced her thoughts about the type of relationship a teacher should have with students Renee replies, “Yes...I saw how my students responded to my cooperating teacher when she would...ask about the family...they seemed to respect her more

because of it....I want that sort of...relationship with my students” (Renee 3). Although Renee was not used to seeing deep caring relationships between teachers and students, she seems to see their value and hopes for a similar dynamic with her future students. Renee followed her co-op’s lead and felt she got as close as she could with her JIS students during the month she was with them. She shares,

I joked with students....that was about as close as I could get. I didn’t know them well enough [for more]. If I had been there for a few more months I definitely think I would have been able to get to that level of my co-operating teacher (Renee 3).

As Renee describes, she was able to move towards the deeper caring relationships her co-op has with her JIS students during her month-long IST experience, but she also recognizes that these bonds take more than a few weeks to develop. Nonetheless, Renee does see herself as capable of developing deep caring relationships with her JIS students if she had more time with them.

However, when asked if she will adopt this relationship approach with her future U.S. students, Renee hesitates. She worries that developing deep caring relationships with all of her students might be too much for her to take on as a teacher. She resists the “other mothering” construction of teaching that some culturally relevant teachers take on willingly. In the context of U.S. public education, the term other mothering has been used to describe the actions of outstanding African American teachers who push their students to succeed in school, serve as advocates for students in trouble, take responsibility for them beyond what is typically expected of a teacher, and overall build deep caring relationships with students (Collins, 2008; Irvine, 2002; Vanover, 2009). When asked how important deep caring relationships are between teachers and students, Renee responds:

I think it's very important. But at the same time, I think that it can get you into...not trouble but get you more involved in the students' lives, and sometimes...you take on a lot of their problems. So if there are family problems, you kind of take those on. And I think that a teacher should be there for that. But it's just a measure of how involved you get with each student. You can't be at that level with every single student, or else you would be more social worker than you would teacher. So it's a very thin line you kind of have to edge every single day with how involved you get with each student, and obviously some students probably need more support than others (Renee 3).

Even though Renee learns the value of deep caring relationships through her time at JIS, she doesn't think its possible to sustain these types of relationships with all of her U.S. students over time. As a means of guarding her energies, Renee seems to think that the best strategy for the future is to only develop these types of relationships with the students who seem to have the most problems. It seems that Renee misses the connection between developing deep caring relationships and supporting students' academic success. By seeing deep caring relationships as only needed to help students with their personal problems, Renee misses an important concept of how to be an effective teacher for all students.

Renee also worries that the familiarity between teachers and students that she saw as a facet of deep caring relationships at JIS will seem out of place in the context of a U.S. classroom. She reflects,

I don't think it will fly...at the school where I will be at....If I...give a student a hug, just the way that would be perceived by parents...or...the school board...it's like walking on thin ice....There is just so much to be worried about. And so many things you can be

accused of....I would love to have a close relationship with students, but with accusations floating around for different things, it's just really hard to do that (Renee 3).

Although Renee can see the value in enacting deep caring relationships in the classroom and would like to have these types of relationships with her future students in theory, she doesn't think it is a good idea in practice. She worries that developing deep caring relationships with students leaves teachers operating in a U.S. classroom context too open to accusations about inappropriate teacher-student relationships. Again, it seems that Renee misses the point that deep caring relationships serve as vehicles to student academic success. Renee would benefit from a more complex understanding of how teachers can demonstrate care for students and how this supports a student's academic success. She seems to miss that there are many ways that teachers can demonstrate deep care. Although physical affection may not be appropriate in the context of U.S. public school classrooms, there are other ways of showing deep care that are appropriate in a U.S. public school context. Some of these ways include resolving discipline issues without sending a student to an administrator, or pushing a student to succeed in academic lessons. With some additional support in making this link, Renee may become convinced that deep caring relationships are needed with all of her students.

### **3.5.3.3 Elizabeth: U.S. teachers are under “too much stress” to form relationships**

Elizabeth is another PST who doubts that the practice of enacting deep caring relationships will transfer well to a U.S. classroom context. She offers a description similar to that of Lisa and Renee of learning about the value of a deep caring relationship during her IST experience at JIS, and she even can link this type of relationship to developing trust between a teacher and students. Elizabeth says that she was able to adapt to this closer relationship style quickly at JIS and liked relating to students in this way (Elizabeth 3). She shares, “I was hugging my kids the second

day I was there. They were hugging me the first day” (Elizabeth 3). When asked if the relationships she saw between teachers and students at JIS were closer than what she had seen in the U.S. she replies, “definitely,” and considers this part of the school’s culture:

It kind of depends on what school you are in and what environment you are in, but they would just hug and kiss....And I just thought that it really opened the doors for the kids to be the same way....I definitely thought that they were very close (Elizabeth 3).

For Elizabeth, deep caring relationships between teachers and students are a consequence of a school’s culture and encourage students to be more deeply caring themselves. This insight demonstrates that Elizabeth does have some understanding of how a school’s context shapes the education that takes place there. Elizabeth also sees deep caring relationships between teachers and students as an important step towards building trust in the classroom:

I want my students to be able to trust me. And I also want to be able to trust them. And I want them to be accountable for themselves and for their own actions....I just feel like having that close relationship with your student, like having them be able to really trust that you are going to be there for them and ...you will fulfill all the duties that a teacher should fulfill for their student....I feel like it makes for a better relationship, it makes for a better classroom environment (Elizabeth 3).

Although this link between deep caring relationships and trust in the classroom was an idea she thought about before her IST, “the thought grew while I was in Mexico” (Elizabeth 3). Elizabeth seems to see the value of developing deep caring relationships with her students as a means of building a trusting classroom environment, and had some success in beginning to develop these types of relationships at JIS. However, Elizabeth doesn’t think that she’ll use this relationship style in a U.S. classroom. She explains:



In America, we're so worried about liabilities and lawsuits...you are too focused on trying not to mess up....People forget that....there are so many different aspects of teaching... you have to be the shoulder to cry on,...[and] the parent ...[who is] excited for a kid when they get their first A on a test....I'm not saying that teachers aren't like that, but because there is so much stress put on teachers now, and so much focus on testing...that there are times that it seems like it's forgotten (Elizabeth 3).

Elizabeth offers two main reasons why she doesn't see herself developing deep caring relationships with students in a U.S. classroom context. First, she echoes Renee's concerns that deep caring relationships may lead to accusations about inappropriate relationships between teachers and students, which could lead to legal trouble for the teacher. And second, Elizabeth highlights the pressure teachers are under to make sure students learn academic content well and succeed on high stakes standardized tests. Under the weight of this pressure, Elizabeth doesn't think U.S. teachers make time to build deep caring relationships with students. Like Renee, it seems that Elizabeth misses the connection between forming a relationship with a student and supporting their academic success. As such, she sees deep caring relationships as important to a student's general well being, but not as important to their academic success. She also seems to share Renee's limited concept of deep caring as only the demonstration of physical affection. She seems to miss the many other ways a teacher can demonstrate deep care without hugging or touching a student.

Overall, even though PSTs like Lisa, Renee, and Elizabeth learn about the value of developing deep caring relationships with students at JIS, they do not seem to link deep caring relationships with student academic success. It seems from Lisa's experience that a source of support, such as an encouraging mentor teacher or school culture that supports developing this

type of relationship as a bridge to academic success, may be needed in order for new teachers to make this connection and sustain this practice. Renee's experience highlights a resistance some PSTs may have to taking on the other mothering role for their students, as it may make the teacher feel overcommitted and perhaps even lead to teacher burn out. Renee's experience also highlights another concern about developing deep caring relationships in U.S. classrooms: fear of lawsuits about inappropriate student-teacher relationships. Elizabeth echoes some of Renee's concerns about deep caring relationships leading to legal trouble in the U.S. context, and also points out that the pressure U.S. teachers face to cover required material and prepare students for high stakes testing pushes many teachers to overlook roles a teacher may serve for students outside of teaching academic content. Renee's and Elizabeth's concerns demonstrate a gap in understanding how deep caring relationships can look between teachers and students, and a gap in understanding how forming relationships with students can lead to their success in learning.

### **3.6 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

The findings of this study suggest that although PSTs talk about a number of important learning opportunities they experienced while working in their IST classroom at JIS, they also report that some of what they learned seems challenging to transfer out of a private, international school context and into a U.S. school context. Three key themes that emerged from the data relate to PSTs reporting that they struggle to see how expectations shape teaching and learning environments, they struggle with instructional shifts in constructing knowledge due to organizational and structural variations in different contexts, and they are unsure how to create deep caring relationships that can serve as vehicles for student academic success in a U.S. public

school context. First these themes will be reviewed, and then implications and conclusions related to these themes will be discussed.

### **3.6.1 Review of data themes**

The first data theme is that PSTs struggle to see how expectations shape learning environments. All three PSTs presented as case studies in this section agree that working at JIS helped them see how powerful teaching and learning can be in a high expectations environment like JIS. However, they all had a difficult time taking a step back and understanding the role expectations played in shaping the experience for teachers and students at both JIS and in their previous U.S. urban school placements. As Lisa discussed differences between JIS and her previous experience student teaching in Rockbrook, an urban characteristic district close to RHU, she described her JIS co-op as a “very good teacher” who “treated her students like people,” and her Rockbrook co-op as a “terrible teacher” who was “flat out mean” to her students (Lisa 2). It appears that Lisa does not see how holding low expectations for students and working in a low-expectations school environment impacts how her Rockefeller co-op teacher experiences her job as a teacher. Renee made similar comparisons between her JIS experience and her previous student teaching at Rockefeller, an urban emergent high school in a mid-sized Mid-Atlantic city. To Renee, the biggest difference between the two environments was that at Rockefeller many teachers seemed to have “given up” on students, and at JIS none of the teachers seemed to have given up on students (FN 23 0508). Again, although Renee sees a difference in teachers interact with students in both settings, she does not seem to make the connection that this difference is related to expectations that teachers and schools hold for students in each setting. And for Annie, the biggest difference between JIS and her previous placement in Rockbrook was her

discovery at JIS that children are capable of meeting high expectations. Annie was surprised at the level of high level thinking her JIS co-op teacher, Miss Olivia, expected from her kindergarten students, and that the students rose to meet these expectations (Annie 2). This was very different from Annie's experience of teaching in Rockbrook's third grade, where most of the classwork revolved around completing state assessment preparation books (Annie 2). Although Annie sees a difference in what students learn in each environment, she does not seem to understand the extent to which expectations held of students in both settings informs the work students perform and how teachers interact with students.

The second data theme that emerged is that PSTs in this study report that they struggle with instructional shifts in constructing knowledge due to organizational and structural variations in different contexts. All three PSTs presented as case studies in this section agree that although they learned important lessons at JIS about utilizing a shared knowledge construction approach to learning instead of acting as a classroom knowledge authority, they are unsure they can implement what they learned in the context of U.S. classrooms. Michelle says that although she thinks that the shared knowledge construction approach used at JIS helps students "learn better," she is concerned that the pressure teachers face in U.S. classrooms to cover a set amount of material in a limited amount of time and "restrictions" related to with state assessment testing make it difficult to "get creative with teaching" and use shared knowledge construction methods such as class discussions (Michelle 2). Although Michelle does recognize that the U.S. context is different from the JIS context, she does not seem to make the conceptual leap needed to re-configure this important teaching practice into a U.S. context. Similarly, Lisa reports that one of the key lessons she learned at JIS was how much students can learn from one another (Lisa 3). However, Lisa thinks using a shared knowledge construction approach to learning would be

“hard” to implement at her previous student teaching placement at Rockbrook, because she seems to believe that state assessment test pressure means that teachers can “only do so much” to move away from a classroom authority stance (Lisa 3). In order to implement a shared knowledge construction approach in her Rockbrook classroom, Lisa reports that she would have to “deviate from the curriculum” to make learning more “fun” and “relevant” for students (Lisa 3). Like Michelle, Lisa understands that the U.S. context is different, but she doesn’t understand how to re-configure the teaching practice she learned without having to “deviate” from she thinks is expected in U.S. classrooms. Finally, Samuel shares similar thoughts, sharing that he believes that the JIS organization of instructional time into eighty minute learning blocks instead of the forty-two minute blocks used at Rockefeller allows JIS teachers to act more as learning guides who “help students” (Samuel 1). He contrasts this with how he understood teaching at Rockefeller, which seemed to him to consist of standing at the front of the class to “give directions constantly” (Samuel 1). Again, Samuel sees the JIS context and the U.S. context as so different, he does not seem to even begin to consider how he can re-configure what he learned at JIS so it can be used in a U.S. context.

The final data theme that emerged is that PSTs in this study are unsure how to create deep caring relationships that can serve as vehicles for student academic success in a U.S. public school context. Although all three PSTs presented as case studies in this section seemed to learn a lot about deep caring relationships at JIS, they did not see these relationships as linked to student academic success. PST Lisa was very impressed by the deep caring relationships she witnessed between her JIS co-op Miss Jenny and JIS students. Seeing the power of this relationship led Lisa to hope that she can have an “open door type classroom” in the future where students feel comfortable talking with her about their problems and she can help them (Lisa 3).

It is unfortunate that Lisa's revelation about the power of teacher-student relationships seems to miss their link to student academic success. PST Renee was similarly impressed by the deep caring relationships she saw between JIS teachers and students. However, much of her understanding of what these relationships were about seemed to revolve around the "hugs" and "hair tousling" she saw teachers give students (Renee 3). As she thinks these physical displays of affection are culturally inappropriate in U.S. classrooms, she is unsure of the role deep caring relationships should play at all in U.S. classrooms (Renee 3). Furthermore, Renee worries that taking on a deep caring relationship with all of her U.S. students would push her to be "more of a social worker" than a teacher (Renee 3). It seems that Renee misses the connection between deep caring relationships and student academic success, and what culturally appropriate deeply caring relationships can look like in a US. context. Finally, PST Elizabeth seems to share some of Renee's conception of deeply caring relationships as focusing on physical affection, and she also sees them as out of place in a U.S. cultural context. Elizabeth also appears to feel that many U.S. teachers forget to demonstrate deep care for students because they are under "so much stress" to complete so much during the school day and there is "so much focus" on state assessment testing (Elizabeth 3). Again, these worries demonstrate that Elizabeth does not seem to understand how culturally appropriate deeply caring relationships can be used in U.S. classrooms as a vehicle for student academic success. Now that the findings of this study have been summarized, I move my discussion onto the study's implications. This study has implications for both the research and practice of teacher education for U.S. classrooms.

### **3.6.2 Implications of study**

Now that data themes have been reviewed, implications and conclusions about these themes will be discussed. Implications emerged from my interactions with the data in the areas of theory, research, and practice of teacher education.

#### **3.6.2.1 Theory**

Data themes in this study are conceptualized around three ideas that I term “culturally grounded instruction.” These ideas were drawn from the culturally relevant teaching framework (Ladson-Billings, 2009) and the diversity and opportunity gap framework (Milner, 2010a). The first idea that is part of culturally grounded instruction is that deep caring relationships between teachers and students should serve as a vehicle for student learning (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, 2010a). The second idea is that teachers should understand how teacher and school expectations of students shape teaching practices and student learning (Milner, 2010b). And the third idea is that teachers should understand how facets of a school’s context shapes the learning opportunities afforded to students (Milner, 2010a). Data themes that emerged from this study extend the ideas associated with both of the conceptual frameworks that informed my conceptualization of culturally grounded instruction.

The first key theme that emerged from the data relates to PSTs reporting that they struggle to see how expectations shape teaching and learning environments. This theme relates most directly to the low expectations and deficit mind-sets tenet described by the diversity and opportunity gap framework. This tenet suggests that teachers who view the knowledge and experiences culturally diverse students have as impediments to their success may find it difficult to set high expectations for them (Milner, 2010a). The present study supports and extends this

idea by suggesting that not only does a teacher's view of the knowledge and experiences of culturally diverse students affect their expectations of these students, their understanding of how expectations can act as a filter to shape any school or classroom environment is also important. Without understanding how expectations can alter any learning environment, teachers like PST Lisa may only see differences in learning environments as simply the difference between "good teachers" and "terrible teachers" instead of the difference between high expectations environments and low expectations environments (Lisa 2). Teachers who understand that this expectations filter exists, and that it can be altered may be more likely to create high expectations classrooms even in schools that seem to be low expectations environments. This added insight adds to the theory introduced by Milner (2010a) in the diversity and opportunity gap framework.

The second key theme that emerged from the data relates to PSTs reporting that they struggle with instructional shifts in constructing knowledge due to organizational and structural variations in different contexts. This theme relates most directly to the context-neutral mind-sets tenet described by the diversity and opportunity gap framework. This tenet suggests that teachers must take the social context of a particular place into consideration when understanding the education opportunities available for a group of students (Milner, 2010a). The present study suggests that not only do teachers need to consider context when understanding education opportunities for students, teachers also need to consider context when attempting to apply lessons across contexts. Without understanding that the concept of context exists and influences how they transfer what they learn from one classroom to another, teachers like PST Michelle may find it too "overwhelming" to attempt to implement lessons learned in new contexts (Michelle 3). This idea also adds insight to theory introduced by Milner (2010a) in the diversity and opportunity gap framework.



The third key theme that emerged from this study is that PSTs are unsure how to create deep caring relationships that can serve as vehicles for student academic success in a U.S. public school context. This theme relates to both the culturally relevant teaching framework (Ladson-Billings, 2009) and the diversity and opportunity gap framework (Milner, 2010a). Based on these two conceptual frameworks, I defined deeply caring relationships at the beginning of this study as relationships where the teacher cares for students as people, and not just as learners. I based this definition on the idea that the “heart” of effective teaching lies in a teacher’s ability to build sustainable relationships with students in any social context (Milner, 2010a), and the idea that teachers should pursue classroom practices that allow all students to master essential academic skills such as literacy and numeracy (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). However this study’s findings suggest that caring for students as people as I previously stated is not enough to lead them towards academic and social success. PSTs and teachers need to construct deeply caring relationships with students with motives more explicit than just wanting to “make a difference” in the personal life of a child, as PST Lisa says (Lisa 3). In order to support the academic and social success of all students, teachers should construct deeply caring relationships both intentionally and actively as vehicles that are used to lead students to success. This final insight furthers theory introduced by both Ladson-Billings (2009) in the culturally relevant teaching framework, and introduced by Milner (2010a) in the diversity and opportunity gap framework.

### **3.6.2.2 Research**

This study furthers the scholarship about how IST programs can help prepare PSTs for U.S. classrooms in two important ways. First, this study confirms and extends what is known about what PSTs may learn about context through IST experiences. Second, this study confirms and extends what is known about what PSTs may learn about relationship building in IST contexts.

First, this study confirms and extends what is known about what PSTs learn about context through participating in an IST experience. Findings appear to support previous research (DeVillar & Jiang, 2009; Jiang & DeVillar, 2011) that PSTs in IST contexts similar to U.S. public school contexts may have an easier time transferring what they learn about teaching than PSTs in their studies who worked in contexts very different than U.S. public schools. The present study corroborates the findings of these two previous studies, as the PSTs in the present study worked in a high expectations private school environment with mostly wealthy students, and they also say that they struggled to transfer what they learned into the seemingly low expectations public school environments of the U.S. urban classrooms where they previously taught. One PST, Michelle, described the idea of transferring what she learned at JIS into the classroom of her previous U.S. student teaching placement as “overwhelming” (Michelle 3). Another PST, Lisa, said that in order to implement what she learned about teaching at JIS into the classroom where she previously student taught, she would have to “deviate” from the school’s curriculum (Lisa 3). The findings of the present study also support the findings of Jiang et al. (2010), which suggests that engaging PSTs in reflection about how they will transfer what they learn about teaching from an IST context into a U.S. classroom helps them do so successfully. As the RHU PSTs participated in very little reflection linking what they learned at JIS to their future work as U.S. classroom teachers, this may have contributed to their struggle to transfer what they learned.

This study also adds complexity to the findings reported by Brindley et al. (2009) and Cruickshank and Westbrook (2013). These two studies suggest that IST placements may be a particularly powerful means for PSTs to learn about context because the PSTs are outside of the dominant culture and so differences between the IST context and the home country context are

more obvious. Although this may be the case, findings from the present study suggest that without an understanding what contextual forces are and how they can shape student learning, PSTs may simply see the differences between the two contexts as those between good teachers & good schools, and bad teachers & bad schools. As PST Renee describes, the biggest difference she saw between JIS and her previous U.S. urban teaching placement was that at JIS none of the teachers seemed to have “given up” on the students, and at her last school many of the teachers seemed to have “given up” on some of the students (FN 22 0508).

Second, this study adds complexity to what is known about what PSTs may learn in IST classrooms that may help them to work with culturally diverse students in U.S. classrooms. Three studies in the literature review (Faulconer, 2003; Miller & Gonzalez, 2010; Willard-Holt, 2001) share findings that suggest that IST experiences help PSTs better understand how to communicate and build relationships with students who are culturally different than them. The findings of the present study also suggest this idea. PST Lisa describes that she learned more about “how to be a teacher” during her month at JIS than any other teacher education experience she had, and that she wants to become the kind of teacher students “feel comfortable...talking to” as a confidant and mentor (Lisa 3). However, this study also brings to light the idea that teaching in an IST context may not help PSTs make important connections about how strong relationships between teachers and students can be a vehicle for student academic success. As PST Renee describes, even after a month at JIS she viewed close teacher student relationships as evidence of “respect” between teachers and students, but could not give any other reasons why she should form these relationships (Renee 3). These links are needed for teachers to support the academic success of culturally diverse students in U.S. classrooms. With these two research

implications now detailed, my discussion shifts to implications this study has for the practice of teacher education.

### **3.6.2.3 Practice**

The findings of this study offer three implications for the practice of teacher education. First, given that most teacher preparation programs prepare PSTs to work in a variety of contexts (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014), it seems that many PSTs would benefit from additional support to help them transfer learning from one context to another. Although PSTs in this study reported that they learned that using a shared construction of classroom knowledge approach helps students “to learn better” (Michelle 3), and that developing deeply caring relationships allows a teacher to really “make a difference” for individual students (Lisa 3), they said that they struggled with transferring what they learned from the high expectations, private school IST context into the context of the U.S. urban classrooms where they had previously taught. For example, PST Samuel sees barriers in the U.S. context that prevent him from utilizing a learning guide stance towards knowledge construction. He thinks that the pressure he faces to “cram” a set amount of material in short blocks of time pushes him into the stance of classroom knowledge authority who stands at the front of the room and “gives directions constantly” (Samuel 1). Teacher education programs could help PSTs transfer what they learn across contexts by providing increased program support and reflection activities designed to think about how to implement lessons learned in new contexts (Jiang et al., 2010). This support might be necessary to help PSTs to transfer learning both from IST contexts to U.S. classrooms, and from one U.S. classroom context to another.

Second, PSTs would benefit from teacher education programming that helps them to better understand how expectations of students shape both teacher and student experiences in

schools and classrooms. Although many of the PSTs in this study reported that they found working in the high expectations environment of JIS to be more personally rewarding for them and more intellectually stimulating for students than the seemingly low expectations urban environments where they taught before, none of the PSTs seemed to understand the role that expectations played in shaping each environment. PSTs like Annie were very impressed with JIS teachers, and thought that the way they treated students with so much “respect” was “just incredible” (Annie 2). However, Annie left her IST program wondering why the JIS learning experience was so much more enriching than the learning experience in her previous U.S. urban classroom, where she perceived the tasks to be “tedious,” and revolving around “seatwork” that kept third graders completing assessment “workbooks” for most of the day (Annie 2). Teacher education programming that focuses explicitly on how expectations shape teacher and student experiences and particularly the power a teacher has to promote high expectations in any school may help PSTs like Annie to find job satisfaction and create high expectations classrooms even while working in schools which seem to be low expectations environments.

Third, PSTs would benefit from more teacher education that promotes a richer understanding of how deeply caring teacher-student relationships can serve as a vehicle for student academic success. Although a number of PSTs in this study reported that they learned more about the value of developing deeply caring relationships with students as a means to mentor them, support their personal development, and promote “a better classroom environment” none of them described deeply caring relationships as important to helping students achieve academically (Elizabeth 3). Furthermore, in the particular context of Mexico, it is culturally appropriate for teachers to hug and touch students. As this practice is not culturally appropriate in the context of U.S. classrooms, it was particularly difficult for PSTs to envision what

culturally appropriate deeply caring relationships could look like in U.S. classrooms. PSTs like Renee questioned if deeply caring relationships were appropriate in the U.S. context at all, saying she did not “think it would fly” at the school where she would be teaching because of “accusations” teachers face related to inappropriate teacher-student relationships (Renee 3). More teacher education support that helps PSTs expand how they conceptualize deeply caring relationships in U.S. contexts and understand how these relationships can facilitate student learning would be of benefit to both PSTs who spend time in IST placements, and to PSTs who complete all of their student teaching inside of U.S. borders.

Overall, IST classroom experiences may be an excellent resource for PSTs to learn about how a context shapes learning, how expectations can influence what a student learns, and how productive relationships between teachers and students can lead to student academic success. Although PSTs in this study do report that they struggle with transferring various learning opportunities out of the context of their IST placement and into a U.S. classroom, the potential for significant learning exists. In this light, PST experiences in IST classrooms may be considered one path to preparing PSTs to successfully work in U.S. classrooms.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

This dissertation study allowed me to take a close look at how a study abroad program could be used to address an important area in teacher education: preparing teachers to successfully work in culturally diverse<sup>25</sup> U.S. classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 1999; McAllister & Irvine, 2000; Sleeter, 2004a). After completing a thorough literature review on this topic, generating and analyzing original data, and moving through the writing process to offer findings and implications, I can confidently say that I do believe that study abroad programs can play a role in preparing pre-service teachers (PSTs) to successfully work in culturally diverse classrooms. In this concluding chapter, I first discuss the two key ideas that illuminate how study abroad programs can play a role in preparing PSTs for culturally diverse classrooms, implications of these ideas for the theory, research, and practice of teacher education, and pose new questions that have surfaced related to each idea. I then introduce next steps for my scholarly research agenda, based on the new questions posed.

This dissertation study makes two original contributions related to understanding how IST programs may prepare PSTs for culturally diverse U.S. classrooms. First, participating in an IST program does seem to be useful in preparing PSTs for culturally diverse U.S. classrooms because IST programs may help PSTs develop cultural noticing ability. Drawing upon my research findings and framework, I conceptualize *cultural noticing*<sup>26</sup> as the foundational capacity of intercultural competence. This new way of understanding intercultural competence and how it

develops may help both teacher education researchers and practitioners as they seek to understand how best to support new teachers working in culturally diverse U.S. classrooms. The second contribution this study makes is a close look at an understudied topic: what PSTs say they learn about teaching by completing a student-teaching experience in an international school classroom, and the problems they say they face in transferring what they learn into U.S. urban<sup>27</sup> contexts. Even though an international classroom experience appears to hold the promise of helping PSTs learn powerful lessons about teaching students who do not share their cultural background, PSTs in this study said they struggled with transferring lessons learned from international contexts<sup>28</sup> into U.S. urban ones. This new understanding of what lessons PSTs learn about teaching and the challenges they say they face in transferring this learning arises from the use of a new conceptual framework that I term *culturally grounded instruction*. I offer culturally grounded instruction as a new way to communicate some important ideas teachers need to understand in order to support the academic and social success of culturally diverse students, and particularly ideas about how they can transfer what they learn in other classrooms and use it to support the success of these students.

#### **4.1 INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE: CULTURAL NOTICING AND CULTURAL RESPONDING**

The first key idea that emerged from this study is that the broad experience of participating in an international student teaching (IST) program may be useful in helping to prepare PSTs for culturally diverse U.S. classrooms because IST programs may help to develop cultural noticing ability among participants. By broad experience I mean all of the facets of the PST's IST



participation including homestay experience, student-teaching, and planned cultural excursions. I suggest that development of cultural noticing capacity is a person's first step to developing the intercultural competence that could help teachers to support the academic and social development of culturally diverse U.S. students. Drawing upon the findings and conceptual framework detailed in chapter two, I define cultural noticing as a person's ability to notice details about cultural context<sup>29</sup>, and I define cultural responding as a follow-on capacity referring to actions a person takes or adapts as a result of cultural noticing. Based on what participants say, most cultural noticing development in their IST program occurs outside the student-teaching classroom, while they are participating in cultural immersion activities. Cultural immersion involves participant immersion in a cultural context outside of their own and involves affective, behavioral, and cognitive learning (Cushner, 2007). So by cultural immersion activities, I mean activities that are part of a cultural immersion experience that allow PSTs to interact with others in a cultural context different from their own.

#### **4.1.1 Implications**

##### **4.1.1.1 Theory**

This first key idea, that ISTs may be helpful in preparing PSTs for culturally diverse classrooms because they may develop cultural noticing capacity, has implications for education theory. As I conceptualize it, intercultural competence is comprised of cultural noticing as a foundational capacity and cultural responding as a follow-on capacity. I suggest that both of these capacities develop when PSTs engage in activities in which they attend to these capacities (Milner, 2003). These capacities may help PSTs working with culturally diverse students in U.S. classrooms in the future, as these capacities may enable them to notice more about the values and cultural

practices of their students and propel them to modify their teaching practice to respond to what they notice.

This new conceptualization of intercultural competence is an original scholarly contribution that complements what already exists in the literature about how teachers can best support culturally diverse students. This conceptualization of intercultural competence extends the culturally relevant teaching framework (Gay, 2010), which I draw upon in chapter two. Engagement in culturally responsive teaching presumes that teachers already have critical cultural consciousness (Gay, 2010). In other words, teachers have the self-awareness and cultural awareness needed to understand that everything that they do in their classroom is a cultural practice that reflects their own cultural values (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Cultural noticing adds to this idea by naming the first steps required for teachers to move towards critical cultural consciousness, and eventually develop the capacity to respond to what they notice in their classroom.

This new conceptualization of intercultural competence leads to a number of new questions related to education theory. Some questions include, “how does conceptualizing intercultural competence in this way make sense in settings other than IST programs?” and “how is this conceptualization useful for the field of teacher education?” These questions are offered for other education researchers to pursue, or I may pursue them myself at a later point in my career. Other more pressing questions that will soon be discussed will take priority on my research agenda in the near future.

#### **4.1.1.2 Research**

The idea that IST programs may develop cultural noticing ability among PSTs also has two implications for teacher education research. The first research implication related to this idea is

that a follow-on component to this study holds the potential to fill a much needed gap in the literature about how best to prepare PSTs to support the success of culturally diverse students. The data generated from this study only examines PST experiences during the IST program and during the two summer months directly after the participants graduate from RHU. In this respect, this study does little to distinguish itself from many other studies about PST preparation for culturally diverse classrooms: it is a small scale study of an individual program and makes few links to preparation to classroom practice (Sleeter, 2000). Although the present study contributes an original conceptualization of intercultural competence that sets it apart from other small-scale program studies, this study could be strengthened through the addition of a follow-on study that focuses specifically on how participants' later classroom practice was shaped by their IST experience. This follow-on study would pursue the following research question: How does an IST experience actually shape a new teacher's classroom practice? This follow-on study is proposed as one of the two studies I intend to pursue in the immediate future. This study would focus on the classroom experiences of alumni of the RHU Mexico City program after they transitioned into their careers as teachers. The proposed study design is described in depth later in this chapter, in the section titled, "Next Steps in my Research." This future line of research is essential because research that links PST preparation to classroom practice is both scant and most needed to understand what preparation strategies are most effective (Sleeter, 2000).

The second research implication related to the idea of IST programs and cultural noticing ability is that although a month-long IST may be useful to develop cultural noticing capacity, it seems to be only marginally useful in developing cultural responding capacity. Development of this follow-on capacity may only occur if the PST already has developed some cultural noticing capacity in a previous experience. Questions that arise around this insight include, "how does an

individual's prior knowledge and experience influence what they say learn about intercultural competence during an IST program?" and "how are the experiences of culturally diverse PSTs in IST programs different than PSTs from a dominant cultural group such as U.S. White PSTs?" These questions are offered for other researchers to pursue, or I myself may pursue them at a later point in my career.

#### **4.1.1.3 Practice**

The idea that IST programs may develop cultural noticing ability also has implications for teacher education practitioners. This study suggests that ISTs may be most useful in developing cultural noticing capacity among PSTs who have little understanding of cultural context at the beginning of the program. Development of this foundation seems to be most vital for White PSTs in the U.S, as most White PSTs have little preparation related to cultural context or experiences with cultural diversity (Castro, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Milner, 2010a; Sleeter, 2008). As such, IST experiences may be a useful way for some White teachers to begin to improve their success in working with culturally diverse students. As recent national level data indicates that over eighty-three percent of U.S. classroom teachers identify as White (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012b), it seems that many PSTs could benefit from participation in an IST program.

However, this study's findings suggest that month-long IST experiences may not go far enough. Although they seem to help some PSTs with no prior preparation develop some cultural noticing capacity, simply noticing differences in cultural context is not enough to enable these PSTs to support the academic and social development of culturally diverse students. PSTs need to be able to respond to what they notice. These ideas about how IST programs may develop intercultural competence among PSTs raise a new question: "how can PSTs best be supported

during and after an IST program in order to maximize their development of both cultural noticing and cultural responding capacities?” Although this study and others suggest that program-led reflection activities promote intercultural competence development (Brindley et al., 2009; Hopkins-Gillespie, 2012; Jiang & DeVillar, 2011; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Sharma et al., 2011; Sharma et al., 2013; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011), this still does not seem to be enough to adequately prepare PSTs to successfully work with culturally diverse students. I may pursue this research question at a later time, and I encourage other researchers to pursue this question as well.

One of the findings from chapter two of this study is that some of the PSTs seemed to miss opportunities for intercultural competence development while in Mexico, and would benefit from increased programmatic support to help them notice and respond to details about cultural context. A number of research studies from the chapter two literature review suggest that programmatic support before, during, and after an IST program promotes the development of intercultural competence (Johnson & Battalio, 2008; Karaman & Tochen, 2010; Mahon & Cushner, 2007; Marx & Moss, 2011; Santoro & Major, 2012; Willard-Holt, 2001). Other studies in this literature review emphasize the importance of focusing on the specifics of the reflection process itself in order to help PSTs to make sense of their cultural experience and promote the development of intercultural competence (Brindley et al., 2009; Hopkins-Gillespie, 2012; Jiang & DeVillar, 2011; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Sharma et al., 2011; Sharma et al., 2013; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). In light of the study finding and these ideas from the literature, the following suggestions are made as examples of the types of program support that may be effective in supporting the development of intercultural competence among PSTs in an IST program.

**(a) Pre-trip preparation and de-briefing**

Pre-trip preparation meetings might cover program logistics, requirements and introduce PSTs to key concepts about culture and intercultural competence as described in this paper. The following concepts could be discussed: culture as conceptualized by Gutierrez (2002), cultural practices as described by Nasir and Hand (2008), intercultural competence, cultural noticing, and cultural responding as conceptualized in this study, and the culturally responsive pedagogy conceptual framework offered by Gay (2010). Introducing these ideas before participants begin their IST experience may help participants be more mindful of these ideas throughout the experience. Introducing the culturally responsive pedagogy framework may help PSTs understand how to locate this experience in their broader understanding of teaching culturally diverse students, and help them to think about how their IST experience is helping to prepare them to work with culturally diverse U.S. students in the future.

Program de-briefing should ideally occur a few weeks after PSTs return from their IST experience, as many participants have significant insights about their study abroad experience only after returning to their home environment (Bradfield-Kreider, 2001; Cushner, 2007). Program de-briefing could occur through a credit-bearing course PSTs take to deeply reflect on the experience, or simply through a “group reunion” meeting if a post-trip credit-bearing course is not feasible. In either case, the focus of this de-briefing should be a return to the concepts about culture and intercultural competence introduced in the pre-trip preparation as described above. PSTs should have many opportunities in this debriefing to discuss and make connections between the experiences they had during their IST experience and the concepts introduced.

**(b) Reflection activities throughout the trip**

Program-led reflection activities might occur through a number of avenues during an IST experience. Two avenues for reflection are directed journal writing and group reflection sessions. Journal writing encourages participants to process and reflect on experiences (Hatch, 2002) and may help to promote intercultural competence. Group reflection sessions are another way to encourage participants to reflect on their experiences, and may serve as a means to start meaningful conversations related to intercultural competence between PSTs and teacher educators, and among PSTs themselves (Marx, 2011).

In the present study, participants were asked to respond to two structured journal prompts a week, as prompts that focus participants on describing experiences involving cultural differences may be effective in enabling participants to describe their own development in intercultural competence (Hammer, 2012b; Parker & Dautoff, 2007). Participants were also directed to write specifically about their experiences teaching at JIS. Asking participants to complete more than two journal entries a week in this present study was not logistically feasible. Some journal prompts that could be used to promote intercultural competence throughout an IST program are: 1) What experiences have you had in the past week where you think cultural differences have influenced how you and your host family interact? 2) What experiences have you had at your student-teaching placement this week that would not have happened if you were still teaching in the United States? 3) What experiences did you have during this past weekend's fieldtrip in which cultural differences played a role? For each of these prompts, participants can be asked to explain the situation, how they navigated the situation, and the situation's outcome. Receiving feedback on journal entries from program leaders throughout the program may make this process even more powerful. This may happen most easily if the journals are completed

through an online blog format such as Wordpress.com that allows an instructor to post comments and questions about the PST's reflection entry.

## **4.2 LESSONS LEARNED IN INTERNATIONAL CLASSROOMS AND CULTURALLY GROUNDED INSTRUCTION**

The second original contribution this dissertation study makes is a close look at what PSTs learn in an international school classroom that can help them to successfully teach culturally diverse U.S. students. In this study, PSTs say they struggle to see how school and teacher expectations of students shape all classroom environments, how differences in context may make the transfer of instructional practices seem unlikely, and how teacher-student relationships can be used to promote student academic success. These understandings emerged by using the culturally grounded instruction conceptual framework to make sense of my data. This framework extends ideas brought forth by the diversity and opportunity gap framework (Milner, 2010a) and the culturally relevant teaching framework (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

### **4.2.1 Implications**

#### **4.2.1.1 Theory**

This study suggests that PSTs may struggle to transfer lessons learned from an international classroom into a U.S. urban classroom. The conceptual framework used to bring this idea to light is a new and original contribution to education theory. This framework is conceptualized around three ideas: deep caring relationships between teachers and students should serve as a



vehicle for student learning (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, 2010a), teachers should understand how teacher and school expectations of students shape both teaching practices and student learning (Milner, 2010b), and teachers should understand how facets of a school's context shapes the learning opportunities afforded to students (Milner, 2010a). The findings of this study support and extend these conceptual ideas and builds new theory in three ways. First, not only does a teacher's view of the knowledge and experiences of culturally diverse students affect their expectations of these students, the teacher's understanding of how expectations can act as a filter to shape any school or classroom environment is also important. Second, not only do teachers need to consider context when understanding education opportunities for any one group of students, teachers also need to consider the concept of context when attempting to transfer teaching practices from one classroom to another. And third, PSTs and teachers need to construct deeply caring relationships with students with an explicit motive to use this relationship as a vehicle to lead students towards academic and social success, not just care for them as people as this term is originally defined in chapter three of this study.

These ideas lead to new questions about how culturally grounded instruction may be used to examine what teachers say are teacher learning challenges across any two teaching environments, not only problems of transfer from an international context to a domestic one. The first question that emerges is, "how can this conceptual framework help to explain the challenges teachers say they have in transferring what they learn between domestic U.S. settings?" Addressing this question seems important as a preliminary means to chart future research steps. I propose to conduct a study that addresses this research question in the immediate future. This proposed study would utilize the culturally grounded instruction framework to examine the challenges PSTs have in transferring what they learn in U.S. student

teaching placements into new U.S. classrooms with culturally diverse students. The proposed study design is described in depth later in this chapter, in the section titled, “Next Steps in My Research.” This proposed study seems to be essential to see if the culturally grounded instruction framework has wider applicability than just examining the transfer of lessons PSTs say they learn in international classrooms.

#### **4.2.1.2 Research**

The idea that PSTs say that they struggle to transfer what they learn from international classrooms into U.S. urban ones also has implications for teacher education research. A number of studies in the chapter three literature review examine what PSTs learn about context while teaching in an international classroom (Brindley et al., 2009; Cruickshank & Westbrook, 2013; DeVillar & Jiang, 2009; Faulconer, 2003; Hopkins-Gillespie, 2012; Jiang et al., 2010; Jiang & DeVillar, 2011; Karaman & Tochen, 2010; J. F. K. Lee, 2009; Lupi et al., 2012; Mahon & Cushner, 2007; Sharma et al., 2011; Sharma et al., 2013; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007; Yang, 2011; Zhao et al., 2009). However, only three of these studies make connections between what PSTs learn about teaching and how to transfer lessons learned to working with culturally diverse U.S. students (DeVillar & Jiang, 2009; Jiang et al., 2010; Jiang & DeVillar, 2011). These three studies suggest that working in IST contexts similar to U.S. public schools seem to help PSTs transfer what they learn about teaching to U.S. classrooms. However, none of these three studies discuss the challenges associated with this transfer in much depth. Therefore, this dissertation study fills a critical gap in the literature by examining in depth the challenges PSTs say they face when transferring what they have learned in international classrooms into U.S. contexts with culturally diverse students.

These ideas about transferring learning between contexts raise two related questions: “how can a better understanding of expectations promote better teacher learning across contexts?” and “how can a better understanding of context promote better teacher learning across contexts?” It seems that these research questions could best be answered through one or more design studies, as design studies are meant to provide theory about how an innovation works (Gravemeijer & van Eerde, 2009). A design study in which PSTs learn complex ideas about expectations and context while student-teaching and are later interviewed or observed to see how these ideas shape their ability to transfer what they learned into new classrooms with culturally diverse students would respond to these research questions. This study could use PSTs who are student-teaching either internationally or domestically. I look forward to conducting such a design study once I hold a faculty position in a teacher education program and I can teach a course in which I can address these ideas.

#### **4.2.1.3 Practice**

The idea that PSTs say that they struggle to transfer what they learn from an international school context into a U.S. urban context offers is meaningful to two different audiences of teacher education practitioners. First, this idea is meaningful to teacher educators interested in using IST experiences as a means to prepare culturally diverse students. International classroom experiences seem to hold the potential of offering PSTs rich learning experiences related to working with students from a cultural background different than their own. However, this study suggests that this potential can only be realized if PSTs receive adequate support in transferring what they learn in international classrooms into new contexts. The following suggestion is offered as a step towards realizing this potential. The participants in this study completed their Mexico City IST program during the last four weeks of their twelve-week student-teaching

experience. By switching the IST component to the first four weeks, PSTs could then transition into U.S. classrooms for the last eight weeks, and have the support of RHU teacher education faculty in transferring what they learned from the international context into the U.S. context. This shift may be particularly powerful for PSTs shifting into U.S. urban classrooms.

The idea that PSTs say that they struggle to transfer what they learn from an international school context into a U.S. urban context also is meaningful for teacher educators interested in promoting better PST learning across any two contexts. This may be quite a large audience, as most teacher preparation programs prepare PSTs to work in a variety of contexts (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014). PSTs in this study said they learned valuable lessons about teaching at JIS. But they say that they struggled with transferring what they learned from the international and private school IST context into the contexts of the U.S. urban classrooms where they had previously taught. Additionally, many of the PSTs in this study reported that they found working in the high expectations environment of JIS to be more personally rewarding for them and more intellectually stimulating for students than the seemingly low expectations environments where they taught before, none of the PSTs seemed to understand the role that expectations played in shaping each environment. It seems that PSTs would benefit from teacher education programming that helps them to better understand how both expectations and context shape classroom experiences for both students and teachers. These ideas raise an additional question: “how can teacher education programs better support PSTs in transferring what they learn across contexts?” It seems that support that focuses explicitly on the power a teacher has to promote high expectations in any school may help PSTs to do this regardless of where they work. I may pursue this research question at a later time, and I encourage other researchers to pursue this question as well. As key ideas, implications, and new questions have been described

for this dissertation study, I now shift my discussion to outlining the next steps in my scholarly research agenda.

### **4.3 NEXT STEPS IN MY RESEARCH**

In this section I propose two studies I hope to conduct in the near future. As mentioned in the previous sections of this conclusion chapter, these two studies are proposed to address the most pressing new questions that emerged through this dissertation study.

#### **4.3.1 Study one: a follow on study about intercultural competence and IST programs**

A literature review about PST preparation for culturally diverse classrooms suggests that most studies on the topic are small scale studies of individual courses or projects that often duplicate one another without adding anything new and without many links to connect this preparation to classroom practice (Sleeter, 2000). In light of this critique, a follow-on study is proposed to add more value to the original study. This follow-on study will examine how the RHU Mexico City IST Program informs the classroom practice of program alumni over time. The follow-on study would pursue the following research question: What do teachers say they learned about intercultural competence during an international student teaching experience that shapes their teaching practice?

#### **4.3.1.1 Methods**

The research question for this first proposed study calls for a qualitative research design, since qualitative research studies examine the meaning people give to a social problem or experience (Creswell, 2012). As interviews have been found to be a particularly rich qualitative data source for examining intercultural dimensions of participant learning (Hammer, 2012b; Hendershot & Sperandio, 2009; Myers & Zaman, 2009), I propose an interview study of RHU Mexico City program alumni. Generating interview data of with alumni from this program would allow me to see the IST experience through perspectives other than my own, and interviewing multiple alumni will help me to describe the complex relationship between intercultural competence and classroom practice (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

##### **(a) Participants**

I am considering two different participant groups for this study. The merits of selecting each one are explained below.

##### **(i) Participant group one: Mexico City alumni – past 20 years**

Participants for this study will be alumni of the RHU Mexico City IST program who are selected by the RHU Mexico City program leaders. Program leaders will be asked to select participants for interviews based on two criteria: A) the alumni have been working as teachers since graduation, and B) the alumni appeared to have experienced growth related to intercultural competence development during their time in the IST program. As the RHU Mexico City program has been in existence since 1993 with the same program director, I am reasonably confident that the director (and various assistant directors) has kept in touch with enough alumni that I can assemble a small group of participants. Selecting this participant group may enable me to generate data that spans over twenty years of teaching practice, allowing me to take a very

long view of how participation in the RHU Mexico City IST program shapes the classroom practice of teachers. Selecting this participant group may lead to a very meaningful contribution to the literature on this topic. However, I did not conduct participant observation of all of these cohorts. The quality of the program they participated in may vary from that which I observed in terms of PST group dynamics and changes at JIS from year to year. These concerns must be kept in mind as I decide which participant group to select.

**(ii) Participant group two: Mexico City alumni – present cohort**

Participants for this study will be alumni of the RHU Mexico City IST program cohort studied in the original dissertation study. Seven participants were interviewed three times each during this initial study. These seven participants will be re-contacted. Some sample interview questions I may ask these participants include:

1. What did you learn during your IST experience in Mexico that has helped you work with culturally diverse U.S. students? How have these ideas shaped your teaching practice?
2. Can you describe an interaction you've had with a student in your U.S. classroom where cultural differences have played a role?
  - Describe what happened.
  - How were cultural differences a factor?
  - How did you navigate the situation?
  - What was the situation's outcome?
  - How do you think your experience in Mexico shaped how you navigated this interaction?

Those participants who have been actively working as teachers for the past two years since their graduation from RHU will be invited to participate in this follow-on study. Only

teachers working with culturally diverse students will be selected. As I have non-RHU email addresses for all participants, I am fairly confident I can re-connect with almost all seven of the participants. I also have a good and productive relationship with all of the participants in this group, making it more likely that they will participate in this study than the proposed participants of the first group. Selecting this participant group may enable me to make stronger connections between my original data and this new interview data. However, these participants have only been working as teachers for two years. As they are still relatively new teachers, they may not be as reflective on how their IST experience shapes their teaching practice as teachers who have been in the classroom for a longer time. These thoughts must also be kept in mind as I select the participant group for this study.

**(b) Data analysis**

I will continue to use the applied thematic analysis approach described by Guest et al. (2012) to analyze the qualitative data generated in this study. This approach was used in both chapters of the original dissertation study. This approach involves a five-step process. First, I will read the data corpus with an eye toward my research question. Second, preliminary themes will be identified from the data inductively by constantly comparing what I read to the research question and coding data for these potential themes. Third, I will note which potential themes are relevant to the research question. Fourth, I will translate relevant potential themes into codes with specific definitions. And fifth, I will pass through the data corpus again, marking segments that show the code attributions. This five-step process will be repeated at least one week later to confirm the validity of codes and definitions (Guest et al.). As directed by this approach, only the themes most strongly supported by data will be pursued.



#### **4.3.1.2 Significance of the proposed study**

This study is proposed as a follow-on to the study described in chapter two, which examines what PSTs say they learn about intercultural competence through an IST program. This follow-on study has the potential to make a meaningful contribution to scholarship about how IST programs can be used to prepare PSTs for working with culturally diverse students, as a review of literature on this topic offers that very few studies about how teacher preparation programs prepare PSTs to work with culturally diverse students make connections to classroom practice (Sleeter, 2000).

#### **4.3.2 Study two: Examining learning across contexts through Culturally Grounded Instruction**

This dissertation study identifies challenges that PSTs describe as obstacles they encounter when transferring what they learn about teaching from their student teaching experience in an international school into the contexts of U.S. urban schools. Data themes in this study are conceptualized around three ideas that together comprise what I term “culturally grounded instruction”: deep caring relationships between teachers and students should serve as a vehicle for student learning (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, 2010a), teachers should understand how teacher and school expectations of students shape both teaching practices and student learning (Milner, 2010b), and teachers should understand how facets of a school’s context shapes the learning opportunities afforded to students (Milner, 2010a). One important question that emerged from this study was: “how can the culturally grounded instruction framework help to explain the challenges teachers say they have in transferring what they learn between domestic U.S. settings, particularly as they begin to work with culturally diverse students?” As this

research question seeks to examine the applicability of culturally grounded instruction as a conceptual framework to examine problems teachers say they have of transferring teacher learning across U.S. domestic settings, this study may broaden the reach of this conceptual framework from one that is only used to examine learning that occurs in international settings to one that can be used among settings that are exclusively domestic.

#### **4.3.2.1 Methods**

The research question for the second proposed study also calls for a qualitative research design, it asks for an examination of the meaning people give to a social problem or experience (Creswell, 2012). Interviews are proposed with novice teachers who completed a teacher preparation program with a U.S. student teaching placement. Some interview questions I may ask participants are:

1. What did you learn during your student-teaching experience that, at that time, seemed important to your success as a teacher once you had your own classroom?
2. How did the ideas you described in the last question actually help you once you had your own classroom?
3. Did you learn anything about teaching during your student-teaching experience that seemed difficult to implement once you were teaching in your own classroom? What seemed difficult and why?

Generating interview data of teacher education program alumni would allow me to see the experience of novice teachers through perspectives other than my own, and interviewing multiple teachers will help me to describe the complex relationship between ideas learned during student teaching and the experience of being a first year teacher (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Participants for this second study will be alumni of a teacher education program who are working as teachers in an urban setting. It is likely that I will select alumni from a program where I will be working. Teachers working in urban settings will be selected as it will be more likely that they are working with culturally diverse students. Participants who have been actively working as teachers since their graduation from Pitt will be invited to participate in this study. I will probably wait until I have taught in this teacher education program for at least a year, so that I may invite alumni to participate who already know me as a professor. I believe having this relationship with me will make them more likely to participate.

#### **4.3.2.2 Data analysis**

I will continue to use the applied thematic analysis approach described by Guest et al. (2012) to analyze the qualitative data generated in this study. This approach involves a five-step process. First, I will read the data corpus with an eye toward my research question. Second, preliminary themes will be identified from the data inductively by constantly comparing what I read to the research question and coding data for these potential themes. Third, I will note which potential themes are relevant to the research question. Fourth, I will translate relevant potential themes into codes with specific definitions. And fifth, I will pass through the data corpus again, marking segments that show the code attributions. This five-step process will be repeated at least one week later to confirm the validity of codes and definitions (Guest et al., 2012). As this analysis approach directs, I will only pursue the themes most strongly supported by data.

#### **4.3.2.3 Significance of study**

The significance of this second proposed study is that it may position culturally grounded instruction as a framework that can be used to describe challenges new teachers say they

encounter in transferring learning from one context to another regardless of where the learning takes place. As most teacher education programs prepare teachers to work in a variety of contexts (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014), understanding the challenges that PSTs say they face in transferring what they learn about teaching into a new context has the potential to make a meaningful contribution to what scholars understand about the topic.

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<sup>1</sup> By culturally diverse I mean non-White people and people whose first language is not English.

<sup>2</sup> Cultural practices are recurring, goal-directed activities that involve two or more people; activities are the smaller tasks that make up these practices (Nasir & Hand, 2008). As

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Gutierrez and Rogoff (2003) explain, a person engages in cultural practices as a result of participation in a particular cultural community over time. Engagement in these practices is not static or located within individuals, but rather dynamic and may vary from one individual to another as the context for participation changes.

<sup>3</sup> By cultural context I mean the cultural practices, values and behaviors a group of individuals engage in within a particular social context at a particular point in time.

<sup>4</sup> Smolcic (2009, 2013) employs the term “cultural noticing” in a way similar to how I use it in this study. She references this term to describe the comparisons PSTs make between their home culture and the culture in which they are immersed through a study abroad program in Ecuador. Similar to the present study, Smolcic uses this term to describe part of the development process that leads to the “intercultural awareness” PSTs develop through study abroad programs. However, Smolcic does not offer a definition for “cultural noticing” in either of these published works; nor does she suggest that cultural noticing is the foundation of intercultural awareness or intercultural competence, as is the case in the present study.

<sup>5</sup> It is important to clarify that this is not a study about how teaching practices are transferred from one context to another, as the data generated does not examine the transfer process. It is a study about *what PSTs say* they see as lessons learned that seem difficult to transfer from one context to another. As such, this study poses questions about what PSTs might transfer into their next classrooms in which they teach based on what they say.

<sup>6</sup> Proper citation of the university website is withheld to preserve the anonymity of Rolling Hills University.



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<sup>7</sup> Proper citation of school website is withheld to preserve the anonymity of Benito Juarez International School.

<sup>8</sup> The International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum promotes caring, knowledge, a motivation to succeed, and a sense of inquiry among youth. The IB organization was founded in 1968 with the goals of teaching intercultural understanding and respect, encouraging young people to think critically and challenging what they are told, and freedom from the influence of any particular state or national government. It draws from many sources and encourages students to consider both local and international contexts in everything that they do. Schools must be authorized by the IB organization to teach the curriculum (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Milner (2012) defines three types of urban school environments. “Urban intensive” refers to schools in large metropolitan areas with over one million people. These schools typically have challenges related to resources and infrastructure, teacher qualifications, the large number of students served, and outside factors impacting students’ lives such as poverty and housing. “Urban emergent” refers to schools in cities with less than one million people. These schools share some of the challenges that urban intensive schools face, but to a lesser degree. “Urban characteristic” schools may be in small city, suburban, or rural areas, and experience some challenges associated with urban areas such as a higher population of English language learners or high neighborhood poverty.

<sup>10</sup> The U.S. Census acknowledges two types of urban areas: both densely developed “urbanized areas” which are territories having a population of at least 50,000 people, and “urban

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clusters” which are similar but have populations between 2,500 and 50,000 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). So by “urban,” I mean an area that fits one of these two U.S. Census definitions

<sup>11</sup> Smolcic (2009, 2013) employs the term “cultural noticing” in a way similar to how I use it in this study. She references this term to describe the comparisons PSTs make between their home culture and the culture in which they are immersed through a study abroad program in Ecuador. Similar to the present study, Smolcic uses this term to describe part of the development process that leads to the “intercultural awareness” PSTs develop through study abroad programs. However, Smolcic does not offer a definition for “cultural noticing” in either of these published works; nor does she suggest that cultural noticing is the foundation of intercultural awareness or intercultural competence, as is the case in the present study.

<sup>12</sup> Proper citation of the university website is withheld to preserve the anonymity of Rolling Hills University.

<sup>13</sup> Proper citation of school website is withheld to preserve the anonymity of Benito Juarez International School.

<sup>14</sup> Proper citation of this conference paper is withheld to preserve the anonymity of Rolling Hills University.

<sup>15</sup> Proper citation of this university document is withheld to preserve the anonymity of Rolling Hills University.

<sup>16</sup> Proper citation of the conference paper that describes UAS program goals is withheld to preserve the anonymity of Rolling Hills University.

<sup>17</sup> Milner (2012) defines three types of urban school environments. “Urban intensive” refers to schools in large metropolitan areas with over one million people. These schools

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<sup>18</sup> Of course I understand that all people represent variations in cultural diversity, but for the purposes of this discussion I acknowledge that historically in the U.S., Whites have been considered members of the dominant culture (Zeichner & Melnick, 1996) and all others have been considered "diverse" (Milner, 2010a).

<sup>19</sup> It is important to clarify that this is not a study about how teaching practices are transferred from one context to another, as the data generated does not examine the transfer process. It is a study about *what PSTs say* they see as lessons learned that seem difficult to transfer from one context to another. As such, this study poses questions about what PSTs might transfer into their next classrooms in which they teach based on what they say.

<sup>20</sup> Milner (2015) offers that although skin color matters, race is about more than skin color. Race is constructed "physically, socially, legally, and historically....by human beings, not by some predetermined set of scientific laws or genetics" (p. 8). Race has been constructed physically based on skin pigmentation, socially as people categorize themselves according to societal information and messages, legally through U.S. laws and landmark court cases, and

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historically as stories about how particular group has fared in society are constructed and passed on to future generations.

<sup>21</sup> Proper citation of the university website is withheld to preserve the anonymity of Rolling Hills University.

<sup>22</sup> Proper citation of school website is withheld to preserve the anonymity of Benito Juarez International School.

<sup>23</sup> The International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum promotes caring, knowledge, a motivation to succeed, and a sense of inquiry among youth. The IB organization was founded in 1968 with the goals of teaching intercultural understanding and respect, encouraging young people to think critically and challenging what they are told, and freedom from the influence of any particular state or national government. It draws from many sources and encourages students to consider both local and international contexts in everything that they do. Schools must be authorized by the IB organization to teach the curriculum (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> Proper citation of the RHU website is withheld to preserve the anonymity of Rolling Hills University.

<sup>25</sup> By culturally diverse I mean non-White people and people whose first language is not English.

<sup>26</sup> Smolcic (2009, 2013) employs the term “cultural noticing” in a way similar to how I use it in this study. She references this term to describe the comparisons PSTs make between their home culture and the culture in which they are immersed through a study abroad program in Ecuador. Similar to the present study, Smolcic uses this term to describe part of the development

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process that leads to the “intercultural awareness” PSTs develop through study abroad programs. However, Smolcic does not offer a definition for “cultural noticing” in either of these published works; nor does she suggest that cultural noticing is the foundation of intercultural awareness or intercultural competence, as is the case in the present study.

<sup>27</sup> Milner (2012) defines three types of urban school environments. “Urban intensive” refers to schools in large metropolitan areas with over one million people. These schools typically have challenges related to resources and infrastructure, teacher qualifications, the large number of students served, and outside factors impacting students’ lives such as poverty and housing. “Urban emergent” refers to schools in cities with less than one million people. These schools share some of the challenges that urban intensive schools face, but to a lesser degree. “Urban characteristic” schools may be in small city, suburban, or rural areas, and experience some challenges associated with urban areas such as a higher population of English language learners or high neighborhood poverty.

<sup>28</sup> It is important to note that the PSTs in this study did not immerse themselves in a Mexican public school community, rather in a private and international school community located in Mexico. As such, the PSTs in this study may have noticed different details about cultural context and they may have learned different lessons about teaching than they would have in a Mexican public school. What PSTs noticed in this study and the lessons they learned only represent the cultural context that is the JIS school community, and cannot be generalized to Mexican public schools or any wider context.

<sup>29</sup> By cultural context I mean the cultural practices, values and behaviors a group of individuals engage in within a particular social context at a particular point in time.